

APPRAISALS of CANADIAN LITERATURE • *Lionel Stevenson*



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APPRAISALS *of*
CANADIAN
LITERATURE

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BY
LIONEL STEVENSON

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Introduction



HIS book is not intended to be a comprehensive history of Canadian literature. Several such works are already in satisfactory existence, notably the section by T. G. Marquis in "Canada and her Provinces", Archibald MacMechan's "Headwaters of Canadian Literature" and "Highways of Canadian Literature," by J. D. Logan and D. G. French. Books of that sort are invaluable for reference and instruction, but, owing to their necessary inclusiveness, they are likely to prove confusing to the general reader. So the present book does not profess to tabulate all the important literature produced in Canada or by Canadians. It is admittedly selective and quite probably capricious. It lacks dates and lists. The chances are that any person who tries to use it as a work of reference will not find the information he seeks.

However, there are certain immediate advantages. First, there need be none of the vexed problems with regard to drawing the

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line of exclusion which must be drawn somewhere, even in a work claiming to be compendious. When that claim has been made, a book inevitably provokes some hurt sensibilities and critical acerbity by reason of what it chooses to mention and what to omit. Again, the effort to treat Canadian literature systematically and categorically is immediately beset by the difficulty of striking a basis of definition among the various writers who might demand inclusion — Canadian-born authors domiciled elsewhere and not using Canadian themes, authors born outside of Canada but genuinely interpreting the country, and so on. These following "Appraisals of Canadian Literature" avoid the awkwardness arising from the adoption of a single rigid definition and the sacrifice of everything to consistency.

Whether or not the present book achieves its purpose, it has at least been directed towards a purpose which has not hitherto been fulfilled or even attempted. Through the foregoing negative definitions some impression of its scope may have been conveyed by the process of elimination. Having thus cleared the ground by declaring what the book is not, I must proceed to explain more explicitly what

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it is. Briefly, it is concerned only with literature that is inherently of some distinctive Canadian quality. It is intended primarily to effect an introduction between the general reader and the points of interest in Canadian literature, for there can be little doubt that the average reader of books in the English language has at best only the vaguest notion that Canadian literature exists. Even if he has read books about Canada—many of them not by Canadians—and books by a few Canadians who have achieved international popularity, he will have had no chance to estimate the range and character of Canadian literature as a whole.

The first necessity is a decision as to the existence and nature of any distinctive Canadian quality. So far as I am aware, no protracted investigation of this literary problem has heretofore been made. Most people have categorically denied to Canadian literature any distinctive traits at all; a few have indicated certain isolated elements of distinctiveness; many, I feel sure, have attained in the course of their reading a general sense of some elusive quality that seems native to Canada, but have not undertaken to define it. My attempt is to

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show that this native Canadian quality is sufficiently distinctive to warrant the acceptance of Canadian literature as a separate entity in the intellectual geography of the world.

Roughly, the first half of the book is devoted to various aspects of the general problem of definition. Canadian literature is considered in its relation to the history and topography of the country, in its relation to the British and American literary influences to which it might be subject, and in its relation to the principal currents of modern thought. The analysis is intended to show to the general reader the quality and extent of the fresh experience which is to be obtained from acquaintance with Canadian books, and it may also have some interest for the special investigator of literary influences and relationships as the hint of an untouched field for his exploration. The remaining portion of the book is a survey of the literary material which is peculiar to Canada, and of the extent to which it has been exploited by Canadian writers. The topographical and social traits of the country are examined in the light of their literary possibilities. Here, again, the general reader is given an epitome of the new experience which

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Canadian literature offers him, and here again there is also a particular interest for a special class, but in this case it is less for the literary analyst than for the literary creator: Canadian authors—both those already producing and those as yet in embryo—will realise more forcibly than ever the tremendous artistic opportunities of their country and the comparatively slight extent to which the immense fund of material has been tapped. But apart from any significance which the literary producer and the literary investigator may possibly find in this study, it will have fulfilled its purpose if it reveals the fact that anyone who takes pleasure in reading will discover in Canadian literature that sense of expansion which comes from realising how men live in unfamiliar circumstances, and from seeing life from the fresh point of view which a new country provides.

The two-fold purpose of the investigation has necessitated a considerable difference in approach between the opening chapters and the concluding ones. The first half of the book is primarily analytic, the second half synthetic. The reason is that in the first half I am seeking the common element of Canadianism

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by reducing representative specimens of the country's literature to their lowest terms and comparing the result; in the second half I am assembling the distinctively Canadian material into groups, according to topic, and attempting to suggest the composite pictures of the topics to be derived from the grouping.

For the same reason the early part of the book deals most extensively with poetry, the latter part with fiction. Poetry is a less localised affair than prose narrative. Local colour is practically an essential in a novel, whereas in pure poetry it is likely to be entirely absent. Most of the finest Canadian poetry, of inherent sufficiency to rank with the lasting literature of the language, would find no place in categories of definite Canadian topics. For this very reason, since external elements of distinctiveness would tend to obscure the inner qualities of the poems, those which deal with the universal poetic themes are best suited for exemplifying the essential Canadian spirit; it is when the Canadian poets are handling the same materials as their confrères of other nations that the difference in outlook is most pronounced. The poems mentioned in the later chapters are necessarily narrative or

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descriptive pieces, which are usually on a lower poetic plane than the lyric and reflective types, in that they invade to some degree the domains of other artistic forms. There are bound to be elements of prose technique in the presentation of a story or a particular landscape, whereas lyric and reflective poetry, by conveying emotional effects beyond the scope of prose, abides exclusively upon Parnassus.

The distinctive scenes and conditions of Canada are so diverse that few writers have encompassed them all. Of the poets, Duncan Campbell Scott and Wilson MacDonald have successfully depicted many aspects of the country's landscape and life, as well as producing distinguished work in the unlocalised category. But for the rest, the poets of special themes, such as Drummond, Mair, and Pauline Johnson, are not prominent in the list of philosophic poets, and conversely Carman, Lampman, Campbell, and the others, have only a few landscape pieces of restricted and unremarkable districts to offset their work on mystical and imaginative lines. So their themes are prevailingly universal, and it is the quality of outlook and philosophy which they hold in common that makes their work pre-

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eminent in any analysis of Canadian literature. On the other hand, the writers of prose have almost without exception lacked the profundity to achieve this philosophic point of view, and have been content with the superficial distinctiveness which Canadian settings and events provide. Accordingly, their work is negligible so far as the first half of this book is concerned, and bulks so largely in the other half only because they have hitherto monopolised the field, and must therefore be acknowledged until something better presents itself. There will be no great Canadian prose until the primitive narrative and descriptive types now prevalent can become imbued with the thought and feeling and imagination still confined to poetry. Prose is a complex art which comes to perfection late in the intellectual development of a civilisation, and the complexity has not yet been mastered by many Canadians. So the later chapters of this book are a survey of prospects and possibilities, not of achievements.

There is little explicit "criticism" in the book. That is to say, I am not concerned with pointing out the faults of individual writers. In general, any work which I have considered

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worthy of mention has merits which outweigh its defects. Some are significant as providing a clue to the elusive national quality, others as endeavouring honestly to depict the real life of the country. Few are in all respects above animadversion; but the indicating of weaknesses is apt to produce a distorted perspective in which the merits are minimised, and besides there is so large an element of personal predilection in such decisions that they are frequently open to dispute. So I have considered it wiser to avoid conclusions regarding relative greatness or perfection, leaving the reader to form his own verdicts on the basis of facts presented so far as possible without comment.

So I make no extravagant claims for the excellence of Canadian literature. I try to make clear that on the plane of concrete representation it offers interesting pictures of conditions, unfamiliar elsewhere, and that on the plane of abstract thought it suggests fresh interpretations of life's meaning. But even more than what it has already achieved, it is significant for the foreshadowing of possible development upon both planes. And in view of the fact that it is the product of but two generations, concurrent with incredible expan-

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sion and change in every department of the country's material traits, one need not expect to find it mature.

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There is one respect in which I wish to acknowledge the limitations of the book. I deeply regret that I did not feel competent to include in it an introductory study of French-Canadian literature. The delightful body of literature in the French language has its own able historians and critics, but since their work is, unfortunately, not readily available to outsiders, there is a real need for a monograph on the subject in English. Anything which I might have written about it for this book would have been necessarily scanty, and incoördinated with the rest of the chapters; and besides, an alien cannot do full justice to such a theme.

It is noteworthy that when the essay which now forms the first chapter of this book was published in periodical form it received its most searching and helpful criticism from French observers, particularly M. George Bugnet in the "Canadian Bookman" and M. Jules Beaucaire in the "Mercure de France."

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So I feel confident that we may expect from one of these gentlemen, or of their compatriots, an adequate introduction to French-Canadian literature for the use of those who wish to know how they may become acquainted with the pleasures to be found therein.

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Appraisals *of* Canadian Literature

I

A Manifesto for a National Literature



TO admit the existence or define the character of a distinctive literature deserving the term "national" for more cogent reasons than the accidental locality of production, is in the case of Canada a very different problem from that entailed in making the same analysis for other countries. This is due to the linguistic and cultural relation in which Canada stands to the Mother Country, complicated by the proximity of another English-speaking nation. Most people are disposed to evade the discussion by denying that a Canadian literature exists or can exist. Certainly the assertion that only native-born Canadians can produce the national literature, or that only Canadian scenes can constitute it, rests on an entire ignoring of what literature is.

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Boundary lines have no existence for the things of the mind and imagination; languages are incidental variations of the medium, rather than primary factors. But to assert that a true national literature, in the correct sense of both terms, can never develop in Canada, is, as I shall attempt to indicate, equally fallacious.

How far the tradition of English literature in America is a harmful domination and how far essential, is too complex a problem to be discussed here. It is an aspect of the deep correlations of "convention and revolt" in literature. Every literary production depends, more or less palpably, on a long and diverse ancestry, in which can be traced not only the whole foregoing literary development of the country where it is written, but the outstanding achievements of human thought and genius everywhere. Each author is an "heir of the ages," and it is impossible to imagine a literary masterpiece appearing full-blown without this evolution having preceded it. Merely because Canadians employ the language and literary forms of English literature, there is no more justification in denying them distinctive qualities than in gainsaying Chaucer's originality because he used French

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metres and conventions, Italian and classical stories.

Nor does the condition of political dependence exert any deep-going influence. Countries subjected to tyrannous suzerainty have produced literature of intense power and abiding beauty; while in the "land of the free"—the United States of America—whose people make of their emancipation a perpetual boast, literature is in a condition not essentially different from that prevailing in Canada. In fact, there are tenable grounds for contending that a period of subjugation or of suffering is a requisite preparation for producing great literature, whether in the individual or the nation. As most of the supreme poets, perhaps all of them—and throughout this chapter I use the word poet for every producer of great imaginative literature—have been subjected, by temperament when not by circumstances, to sorrow beyond the lot of common men, while prosperity and peace of mind bring forth "best-sellers" and complacent mediocrity; so among nations, literature becomes enervated in ages of supremacy, and gains vitality through times of depression or of sudden liberation and national development. While

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Canada and the United States have not suffered political tyranny, they have gone through the hardships of pioneer days and reached a period of expansion comparable to that of Elizabethan England; but there are other factors which prevent any similarity in the two ages on the intellectual side. On this continent the language and the whole cultural system are not, as in older civilisations, the product of many centuries during which the natural influences of the country have moulded the soul of the people, who have grown out of the soil and through countless generations have lived in intimate communion with it. In this country the civilisation is not thus indigenous: it is a perfected mechanism, evolved under very different conditions and introduced ready-made. It has gradually become modified to some extent by the inherent character of this continent, but the change has been delayed and disrupted by the constant transfusion of peoples from varied races, each with a different mental background, as well as by unbroken intercourse with the Mother Country. In the United States the outcome is a situation still anomalous enough; Canada, a newer country with more scattered population,

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has had even less chance of developing a homogeneous outlook.

Any effort to define Canadianism is usually productive only of negatives—it is not “colonial” but neither is it “American” (i.e., pertaining to the United States). And to most of the written matter produced in the country even these vague distinctions do not apply. Yet the possibility of a more positive and vital quality becoming embodied in Canadian literature is not inconceivable; it is my belief that indications of this quality, though still obscured to a greater or less degree by adventitious elements, are to be seen in the work of the chief Canadian poets. Briefly to suggest something of its character, depending on the reader to expand and carry on the idea, is the purpose of the present analysis.

There is a useful analogy, I think, in the Irish literary revival of the past thirty years—a movement recently brought to a focus by the Nobel prize award to its prime fosterer. It illustrates, by the way, my previous suggestion, for there can be little doubt as to the motive force contributed by the “wrongs” of Ireland—in how far real or imaginary does not affect the issue. It remains to be seen

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how the birth of the Free State will influence Irish literature, and incidentally we may be helped to decide the intrusive question "did Confederation advance or retard the chances of nativistic literature in Canada?" But the important point is that the Irish writers, employing the English language and literary traditions, created a body of literature so noteworthy and so distinctive that it is a recognised province in the world of the imagination. "The Celtic Twilight" bears a clear connotation for anyone who has read Yeats and A. E. and Lady Gregory. I venture to assert that the essential thing by which we know it is not the Irish legend and history employed, since the lyrics of Yeats and A. E. are domiciled in no land but that of the spirit, and the whole work of Dunsany sets forth a new cosmography altogether. Something deeper and less tangible than landscape, something more essential, has been contributed by the Irish renaissance to our imaginative heritage—a new outlook upon the eternal things, existence revealed in a fresh aspect to the vision of the mind.

Surely few countries are better fitted than Canada for the opening of another new win-

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dow. The prospect revealed would be as different from that of the Celtic revival as are Canada's mountains and prairies from the glens and moors of Ireland, the spirit of the pioneer from the mood of the dreamer. Without going into all Taine's analyses of the effects of climate, scenery and living conditions on literature, one may assume that while a race is developing its particular national culture and temper of mind these factors are of first importance. The inhabitants of Canada, brought in their whole system of civilisation ready-made. They have erected a barrier against the natural influences of the country; but those with the poetic gift of seeing and feeling cannot be quite oblivious to Canada's immensity and power. I think that this perception is gradually increasing and taking form in Canadian poetry, from the days of George Frederick Cameron through Lampman and Bliss Carman and Duncan Campbell Scott, to the generation of Robert Norwood and Wilson MacDonald.

This individuality is not at all like that which is coming to be embodied in the literature of the United States. There is between the two countries a significant difference, not only

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geographically, but socially and spiritually. The first great interpreter of the new world, Walt Whitman, wrote scarcely a poem that could apply to Canada without modification, so pervasive is the distinctive quality of "Americanism", and in his successors, such as Carl Sandburg, this feature is still more pronounced. It resides not so much in the contrast of Canada's forests and plains and mountains with those of the United States, as in two other considerations: the preoccupation, even in Whitman's time, with cities and factories and immigrating swarms; and the studied emphasis which our southern neighbours set upon the externals of national consciousness—what is colloquially known as "flag-waving." The latter point may seem paradoxical, so I repeat that an explicit and encouraged sense of nationality does not necessarily produce great literature. Patriotic poetry is seldom on the high plane in which the spirit moves freely among the supreme minds of all nations. It is only when the poet's country has become for him a living being, endowed with a soul, and not an abstraction of economists, that his love for her can raise his work to that lofty region. Then at last the barriers of convention, of alien

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or obsolete traditions, are utterly cleared away, and the poet's communion with his country is manifest in all his work. But the intercourse is subconscious, if one may use the slang of the psychologist for something that is really, in this case, more rare and exalted than the movements of the conscious intelligence. The poet draws his life from the latent forces of the country, and in his turn he gives form to that which must otherwise remain unrevealed to men.

In Canada the configurations of nature have scarcely been modified as yet by the presence of humanity. Scenes are pervaded, in the Old World, by the sense of the past, the atmosphere of countless settled generations. Fostered in such an atmosphere, the poetic mind assumes a very different cast from that influenced by the sense of space and of nature's permanence. In Canada the primordial forces are still dominant. So Canadian art is almost entirely devoted to landscape, Canadian poetry to the presentation of nature. But there are deeper implications than that. The distinctive type of landscape painting which has established itself in the country is anything but the photographic type; it is essentially interpreta-

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tive. And Canadian poetry is equally concerned with the apocalyptic. The poetic mind, placed in the midst of natural grandeur, can scarcely avoid mysticism. It is not the sectarian mysticism of the Old World, steeped in religion and philosophy, but an instinctive pantheism, recognising a spiritual meaning in nature and its identity with the soul of man.

I am not asserting that the ultimate message of Canadian literature will be precisely this. I merely point out that analysis of the Canadian poetry already existing shows that the tendency is towards the expression of this attitude, and that it is consistent with the psychology of the relation between the poet and his surroundings in this country. Of course, I do not assume that genius—or even, if you will, talent—can be marshalled in categories. Among the Canadian poets who have done genuine and original work there are no two who have approached the vision from the same quarter. Lampman's primary concern was with the landscape, Bliss Carman's is with the ecstasy of communion. Duncan Campbell Scott is preoccupied with the beauty and perfection of the form in which the vision is to be embodied, and this applies also to Marjorie

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Pickthall. George Frederick Cameron was pre-eminently the seer, Albert Smythe is the philosopher, Robert Norwood the humanitarian. In Wilson Macdonald all these qualities are manifested at various times.

Archibald Lampman's most characteristic work is to be found in his Wordsworthian nature poems, typical of which are "April in the Hills," "Ode to the Hills," "The Return of the Year," "The Favourites of Pan." In these the presentation of objective pictures predominates. The underlying mysticism is evident in them, however, so it is justifiable to quote one of the sonnets in which he expressed the quintessence of his idea. This is the final sonnet of three called "The Largest Life":

There is a beauty at the goal of life,
A beauty growing since the world began,
Through every age and race, through lapse
and strife
Till the great human soul complete her span.
Beneath the waves of storm that lash and burn,
The currents of blind passion that appall,
To listen and keep watch till we discern
The tide of sovereign truth that guides it all;
So to address our spirits to the height,
And so attune them to the valiant whole,

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That the great light be clearer for our light,
And the great soul the stronger for our soul:
To have done this is to have lived, though fame
Remember us with no familiar name.

Bliss Carman's finest poems embodying his vision of unity with nature, such as "Earth Voices," "Overlord," "At the Making of Man" and many others, are too familiar to require quotation. "Spring Magic," a shorter piece of exquisite simplicity, may be given:

This morning soft and brooding
In the warm April rain,
The doors of sense are opened
To set me free again.

I pass into the colour
And fragrance of the flowers,
And melt with every bird-cry
To haunt the mist-blue flowers.

I thrill in crimson quince-buds
To raptures without name;
And in the yellow tulips
Burn with a pure still flame.

I blend with the soft shadows
Of the young maple leaves,
And mingle in the rain-drops
That shine along the eaves.

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I lapse among the grasses
That green the river's brink;
And with the shy wood-creatures
Go down at need to drink.

I fade in silver music,
Whose fine unnumbered notes
The frogs and rainy fifiers
Blow from their reedy throats.

No glory is too splendid
To house this soul of mine,
No tenement too lowly
To serve it for a shrine.

How is it we inherit
This marvel of new birth,
Sharing the ancient wonder
And miracle of earth?

What wisdom, what enchantment,
What magic of Green Fire,
Could make the dust and water
Obedient to desire?

Keep thou, by some large instinct,
Unwasted, fair, and whole,
The innocence of nature,
The ardour of the soul;

And through the house of being
Thou art at liberty
To pass, enjoy, and linger,
Inviolat and free.

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In the case of Duncan Campbell Scott, it is particularly hard to choose a short poem which can stand as characteristic. Since perfection of form and phrase is a distinguishing quality of his work he can be appreciated best by reading a number of his poems, which might exemplify his variety of music and effect. One can but mention "The Forgers," "Rapids at Night," "At the End," "The Lover to his Lass," "To the Heroic Soul." His melody and his thought are characteristically displayed in the "Improvisation on an Old Song":

I

Growing, growing, all the glory going;
Flashing out of fire and light, burning to a
 husk,
All the world's a-dying and failing in the
 dusk—
 Growing, growing, all the glory going.
Rust is on the door-latch, ashes at the root,
Dry rot in the ridge-pole, canker in the fruit;
 Growing, growing, all the glory going.
Plot, ye subtle statesmen,—a trace of melted
 wax;
Bind, ye haughty prelates,—a thread of
 ravelled flax;
 Growing, growing, all the glory going.

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March, ye mighty captains,—an eddy in the
dust;

Rave, ye furious lovers,—a stain of crimson
rust;

Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Pictures, poems, music—their essential soul
Idle as dry roses in a silver bowl;

Growing, growing, all the glory going.

London is a hearsay, Paris but a myth,
Rome a wand of sweet-flag withered to the
pith;

Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Palsy shakes the planets, frost has chilled
the sun,

In a crushing silence the All is dead and
done.

Growing, growing, all the glory going.

II

Going, going, all the glory growing,
See it stir and flutter; that is singing, hark!
Singing in the caverns of the primal dark.

Going, going, all the glory growing.

What is in the making, what immortal plan
Draws to its unfolding? 'Tis the Soul of man.

Going, going, all the glory growing.

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See it mount and hover, singing as it goes,
Battling with the darkness, nourished by its
woes;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The bale-fires of midnight glaring in its eyes,
Past the phantom shadows see it rush and
rise;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The supernal morning on its dewy wings,
Soaring and scorning the lust of earthy things;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The beatific noontide on its eager breast
Springing and singing to its halcyon rest;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

In its starry vesture not a vestige of the sod,
Winging still and singing to the heart of
God.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

Marjorie Pickthall, too, so nearly approximates perfection in all her work, that to choose one poem for quotation is to exclude a score with equal claims. Selecting almost at random, I pick "The Immortal":

Beauty is still immortal in our eyes;
When sways no more the spirit-haunted reed,

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When the wild grape shall build
No more her canopies,
When blows no more the moon-gray thistle
seed,
When the last bell has lulled the white flocks
home,
When the last eve has stilled
The wandering wing and touched the dying
foam,
When the last moon burns low, and, spark by
spark,
The little worlds die out along the dark,—

Beauty that rosed the moth-wing, touched the
land
With clover-horns and delicate faint flowers,
Beauty that bade the showers
Beat on the violet's face,
Shall hold the eternal heavens within their
place
And hear new stars come singing from God's
hand.

George Frederick Cameron, who died forty
years ago at the age of thirty, embodied the
poetic energy which springs from high ideal-
ism and fervent sympathy with his fellows:

Ah, me! the mighty love that I have borne
To thee, sweet song! a perilous gift was it

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My mother gave me that September morn
When sorrow, song, and life were at one
altar lit.

A gift more perilous than the priest's: his lore
Is all of books and to his books extends;
And what they see and know he knows—no
more,
And with their knowing all his knowing
ends.

A gift more perilous than the painter's; he
In his divinest moments only sees
The inhumanities of colour, we
Feel each and all the inhumanities.

Albert Smythe uses the symbolism of mystical philosophy to convey his noble conception of life. This is his poem "Sun Worship":

Steadfast the Sun steers through the awful
void;
Steadfast the earth wheels in her mighty
place;
Only we mortals lag and are annoyed
That the Gods march not with our stumbling
pace.

What are our follies, what are all our fears,
Our deep despair, or that bright hope that
buoys?

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What all the rapture, all the bitter tears—
What but the child's adventures with his
toys?

Comrades that waver, lo! the All-Shining One
Loves the least lucent of His starry line;
He knows His course, and ours is but to run
Sure in the circle His just laws assign.

The love of law is our true law of love;
In this rich concord life divine is won;
Our fainter octave thrills to that above
And wakes the silent Wisdom of the Sun.

Robert Norwood expresses with vigour and
wide imaginative range the gospel of love and
tolerance and the infinite heritage of man's
soul:

O little pale pilgrim of dreams!
Do you know the names of the flowers,
The ferns by the pools and the streams,
The kisses of God in the showers;
Do you hear His "Hello" on the hills
Where a wind comes out of the cloud,
And fail of the magic that fills
Companions who meet in the crowd?

Thou slow of the heart to believe—
Thou blind of the eyes to behold!
Let go of the things that deceive,
Vain baubles of silver and gold;

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Come out and be one with the throng—
Your brothers who wait by the way—
And sing the new Liberty Song
At the wide-flung doors of the day.

Companion of flower and fern,
A brother of Christ and the clod,
And one with all spirits that yearn
The realized image of God;
The centuries wait for thy wings,
And aeons have followed thee far:
Lay hold of the sceptre of things,
Thou lord of the atom and star.

As a final illustration may be cited the most recent of noteworthy Canadian poets, Wilson MacDonald, since almost everything he has written is important for this consideration. His militant advocacy of brotherhood and pantheistic faith is displayed in "Barbary":

"What is your creed?" cried the census man,
And I answered: I have none:
I am one of the hosts of Barbary
Who worship beneath the sun.
We have temples aflame with flowers,
And wearing the clouds their towers.
And the seven days are the hymns of praise
We sing to the Holy One.

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The creed hath need of a belfry bell
To summon the knee to prayer.
But we of the hosts of Barbary
Are called by the love we bear.
O, we ride through the morning dew
To gird on the Master's shoes,
And we wait by night, while the stars burn
white,
The soul of His smile to share.

There is no uniformity among these poets in poetic method or personal taste or ostensible subject. They are as varied as the land itself, and similar distinctions can be found among the other Canadian poets. But to the sympathetic reader there is a deeper quality of which they all partake, a quality that cannot be fully defined in words. Almost inarticulate as yet, it can nevertheless be sensed ever and again when one ceases to be held by what the poet is ostensibly saying and the way in which he is trying to say it. Attempts to describe it can be at best only finger-posts to suggest a way for the reader's pilgrim mind. The quality is idealistic, unquestionably, and yet acknowledging the so-called "realities" of life; pantheistic, as I have said; seldom revolutionary, perhaps, but with much of the pioneer

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spirit, independent and assured ; forward-looking and confident in the future of man. Many other adjectives could be appended, growing with every addition into a more meaningless catalogue. For the person not endowed with the particular form of insight by which the hidden springs of poetry may be glimpsed, such an enumeration would seem but an intellectual exercise, no better than the rhetorician's juggling of abstractions ; for the other sort of person, his own innate perception can teach him more clearly and truly than any analysis. He will probably find little in what I have said from which he will not demur to some extent, and I shall be delighted that he should do so. I am prepared to admit that my analysis, as it stands, is largely moonshine ; I not only admit but proclaim emphatically that the outline of it which I have given is incomplete and clumsy ; but if I provoke any person to think about the matter more attentively I am content. The existence of any literature depends on the audience as well as the singer ; and every Canadian who begins to open his mind to what his country really means is advancing the day when Canadian literature can become a recognised and vital entity.

A M A N I F E S T O

The world is entering upon a new dispensation, we are told: certainly all institutions are insecure and established traditions are cracking. At such a moment a fresh and positive voice can reach the world's thought through literature with unusual effect. Those who have faith in Canada, not backward in claiming for their country a place in the economic reconstruction of the world, should feel also that Canada is capable of giving to poets and artists an inspiration that will be recognised in the world of the spirit. Whatever form that inspiration may take, it is more likely to be reached through a sincere effort to perceive the country's inward virtue (in the old sense) than through oratory and aggression. Canada's "patriotic poetry", large in bulk and as good as one might expect in quality, has had its day. Fine though it is, Roberts' "Confederation Ode" is less likely to be the forebear of a genuine Canadian literature than Carman's "Lord of My Heart's Elation" or Wilson MacDonald's "Song to the Valiant."

II

The Status of Overseas Literature



AMONG the numerous and entangled "tendencies" and "influences" constituting English literature during the past century, a period in which philosophic theories and social conditions rendered the task of the literary historian more complicated than ever before, there is one particular aspect that has been almost wholly neglected. Yet this subject, the extension of literary production in the English language into all parts of the Empire, should be an attractive theme for critical enquiry. It has a very intimate relationship with wide social and administrative questions, such as the propagation of a culture in diverse environments, the potency of intellectual and spiritual elements in the unification of a vast Empire. And apart from this significance for the observer of statecraft, it supplies the

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purely literary student with a “pou sto” from which to assail his gigantic task of estimating contemporary values. English literature of the past two or three generations, when seen reflected in the mirror of its colonial counterpart, assumes a perspective which cannot be achieved by any other means. The selection of elements for the construction of the new literature, and their adaptation to the circumstances of a wholly different environment, helps towards the formulation of a standard by which to estimate the relative vitality of various current ideas of the period.

The tendency towards localisation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century has become an accepted fact. Scotland has her recognised “Kailyard School” in fiction, Ireland her recognised “Celtic revival” in drama and poetry. Separate counties are accumulating their distinctive bibliographies. But the more distant parts of “Greater Britain” are not so well known. India has commanded attention in literature through two outstanding authors—Rudyard Kipling, representing the Anglo-Indian element, and Rabindranath Tagore, the native. But even in this instance no adequate study of general relationships has been made;

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and the literary activities of the other dominions and colonies, of Canada, Australia, and Africa, are practically unknown outside of their own boundaries. Quite apart from critical theories, surely there could be no better method of promoting mutual knowledge and sympathy among the component parts of the Empire than by interchange of the literature depicting their conditions of life? And surely residents of the Motherland could comprehend more vividly the extent and reality of the Empire by reading a few such books than through any quantity of statistics?

In using Canadian literature for the specific illustration of the type of interest which this research can offer, one must take into account a complication which would be negligible in the case of other dominions. This is the proximity of the United States. Secondary though it is to the influence of the Mother Country, the influence of the new American civilisation has necessarily been strong. It is true that the interaction has been to some extent mutual—the distinctive “American School” of humour, for instance, seems to be derived from the Canadian Haliburton. But at the present day the economic relationship of Canada and the

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United States is so close that the "culture" of the larger and richer nation intrudes along with its manufactures and capital. This is more especially the case in fiction, as a Canadian who wishes to earn a living by his novels must depend on the markets of the United States. In poetry, as in painting, the Canadian school is more distinctive and independent, little touched by the current taste across the border.

At first glance, Canada's position seems to have produced something of a neutralizing effect. There is little of the characteristic swing and swagger of Australian literature, which may be for convenience labeled as typically "colonial," nor are there the bizarre contrasts of oriental and occidental conventions which give distinction to the literature of Anglo-India. So far as subject-matter and "local colour" are concerned, Canada does not differ very essentially from the United States. The Indian, the prairie of cattle ranges and grain, the forests and mines—all these exist south of the forty-ninth parallel as well as north of it. Even so unusual a figure as the French-Canadian has his counterpart in Louisiana. There remains the climate, sufficiently

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distinctive to have earned for Canada the title "Our Lady of the Snows"; but this feature of the country has fallen into the hands of the popular fiction-mongers and scenario-concocters, who have reduced it to a convention utterly divorced from reality.

It is the result of the economic pressure of which I have just spoken that Canadian fiction almost without exception has conformed to the formulae of popular magazine stories. Of all literary "genres" the novel is by far the most susceptible to commercialisation, on account of the wide public which responds to a certain type of narrative; so any Canadian novelist wishing to take advantage of that more lucrative audience is almost compelled to follow the conventions which the British and American stories with a so-called Canadian setting have taught the public to expect. This stereotyped notion of the country, having been established by persons who are not Canadians either by birth or residence, has no contact with actuality; but it has become so fixed in the public mind that a more faithful depiction of Canada cannot gain sufficient popularity to supplant it. The formula comprises a landscape of illimitable snow, peopled with a Bayard of the

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Mounted Police, a trapper or two, and a beautiful half-breed girl, all equipped with dog-sleds and rifles. If such incidents ever do occur at the present day, they are certainly not typical of the life led by Canada's nine million inhabitants. But the average reader of novels and magazines must imagine that they are.

Of the genuine Canadian novelists, the first to become familiar to the English public was Sir Gilbert Parker, whose knowledge of the country cannot be challenged, but who practised the historical romance without making any important innovation. Besides, his scenes and characters represent only a limited aspect of Canada—the early French settlers and, in the “Pierre” books, the French and half-breed trappers of the North. To this extent, he has fostered the popular idea of the country's essential frigidity.

More recently, several Canadian writers have won an extensive hearing outside their own country. The virile and picturesque—frequently over-picturesque—verse of Robert Service is well known, but he, too, depicts an inaccessible part of the extreme north, where only a few hundred Canadians have ever penetrated. A juster reflection of Canadian life,

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although tinged with sentimentalism of a conventional sort dear to numerous readers, is to be obtained from the "best sellers" of L. M. Montgomery and Ralph Connor. The former depicts the placid rural life of the older maritime provinces; the latter ranges from the hardy Scots pioneers in Ontario to the railway builders and miners of the farther west. And there is the significant figure of Stephen Leacock. His humour masks a keen observer of Canadian civilisation, as exemplified by the ordinary citizen who has never been a pioneer or a cowboy or a gold-seeker. It is noteworthy as evidence of Canada's januform situation that Dr. Leacock is one of the few humourists who are equally popular in the United States and Great Britain.

The British were preceded in Canada by two other races, both of whom have been interpreted in poetic form. The Indians speak through the late Pauline Johnson, daughter of a chieftain and his English wife. In poems and prose legends she portrayed the Indian's courage and endurance, and the imaginative beauty of his religion. The French-Canadian habitants speak through Dr. W. H. Drummond, who employed their quaint "patois" for

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humour and pathos with equal effectiveness. His work is now being carried on in prose by Paul A. W. Wallace.

A Canadian race more primitive than the Indians has its interpreters also: a new type of animal story has been evolved by two Canadians, Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton. Until they began to write, animals in literature had been confined to the allegorical "beast-epic", a tradition extending from Æsop to the ever-entrancing "Jungle Books." But such discursive and ratiocinative creatures would be particularly out of place in Canada, where it is hard to maintain an anthropocentric outlook. So Roberts and Seton have proved that interesting stories can be written from the animals' point of view, using the actual incidents of their life and not exceeding probability in respect to their psychology and intelligence. This is the one distinctive type of fiction that can be definitely attributed to Canadian origins.

Coming to the literature depicting everyday life in Canada, one is puzzled as to the best arrangement for reviewing the various and dissimilar scenes. It seems the simpler method to adhere to a geographical progress

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from east to west. Thus one starts with the Labrador coast and the "Grand Banks." The hard work and grim circumstances of the seafaring population are described in novels and short stories by Norman Duncan and Frederick W. Wallace. Of Quebec life the outstanding picture is "Maria Chapdelaine" by the French novelist, Louis Hémon, recently translated into English. The province of Ontario appears in many poems and prose works, from the Great Lakes, painted with all their beauty and strangeness in "The Bridge", by Marjorie Pickthall, to the barren Northern region of Merrill Denison's disillusioned plays.

But already the geographical classification begins to prove inefficient. Some of the most characteristic Canadian scenes are not to any extent distinguishable as pertaining to Ontario, Quebec, or the Maritime Provinces. For instance, there is the endless procession of the seasons, more impressive, perhaps, in Canada than anywhere else, and a constant delight to Canadian authors. All the transitions of the year have their beauty, which imperatively bespeaks poetic reproduction: winter with glittering snow, steel-blue sky and sombre trees; the magical resurgence of life

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and tenderness in the spring; summer's breathless heat, and the gaudy pageantry of autumn.

Then there is the distinctive Canadian picture of illimitable forests, with their dignity and mystery paralleled by nothing else in nature. Few people can avoid feeling in the forest a sense of some impersonal entity which there alone almost reveals itself to human consciousness. In the poetry of Bliss Carman and Duncan Campbell Scott, in the prose of Arthur Heming, the magic of the forest is haunting and memorable.

The farm is another important element in Canadian life. Here the majesty of untamed nature is replaced by more homely pleasures—the fellowship of domestic animals, the sequence of cultivation and harvest. As a contrast with the awe of the wilderness, one enjoys the glimpse of a haven conquered and subdued from nature's aboriginal sway. The humour and human interest to be derived from a meticulous record of these things has been proved by Peter McArthur, and he is finding a disciple in this type of Georgic essay in Newton MacTavish. More gravely presenting the same theme is Charles G. D. Roberts' fine sequence of "Sonnets of the Common Day."

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Resuming the westward advance, one finds a different landscape in the prairies. This is a phenomenon even vaster than the lakes and forests, and as yet it has defied literary representation. Wilson MacDonald's "Song of the Prairie Land" stands almost alone. The descriptive sketches of "Janey Canuck" are bright and readable, and several recent novels have attempted to portray the life of the prairie settler; but the epics of the wheat fields, the cattle ranges, and the great railway lines are yet to be written. The same remark applies to the Rocky Mountain region and the Pacific Coast; both have that quality which Stevenson described as demanding to have stories written about them; they await the man of genius who will undertake to understand their soul and reveal it to the world.

Although various other departments of Canadian literature remain to be discussed, such as patriotic poetry, showing the dominion's attitude towards the Empire, and historical narratives which are often stirring records of courage and perseverance, enough has been said to indicate the extent and variety of theme which should make Canadian literature interesting to any reader. But this is only one half

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of the two-fold attraction of literature—the dual appeal that Aristotle distinguishes as the individual and the universal. That is to say, literature not only represents particular scenes and conditions which are interesting for their unfamiliarity, but also uses them as the vehicle for a fresh illumination of the mysteries common to man's existence in every age and clime. Some attention must therefore be paid to this second attribute of Canadian literature, its "universal" value as a contribution to man's comprehension—or rather to his intuitive and imaginative conception—of his place in the world.

Some idea of this quality of Canadian literature has already been suggested in the preceding chapter, but another effort at definition must be made in the light of general tendencies in modern thought. It may be summed up as a revaluation of mental equipment by fresh contact with the primordial natural forces. As I have pointed out, the contrast in Canada of man's puny powers and achievements with Nature's permanence and immensity render ludicrous the anthropomorphic attitude which has become traditional in older civilisations. Tested by the rigours of such a

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country, the institutions and fashions of civilisation take on new semblances. Whether this reversion to the primitive is preferable to the involutions of a highly developed society has been a topic of debate since the days of Rousseau; but, setting aside theories of "les temps d'innocence et d'égalité", there can be no doubt that the human imagination was acting in such an environment when it evolved some of its loftiest conceptions of the supernatural. The great basic achievements of the human spirit have come out of races in close contact with earth. The Old Testament springs from the barren hills of Judah and the burning sands of the desert. The Greek Pantheon points back to the shepherd Dorians making their first effort to equate the powers of external nature with the human personality. The Scandinavian mythology has its root in even more desperate conflicts of man against his physical surroundings. But in Europe all these concepts have long ago ceased to be vitalised by the Antaeus-contact with earth. They are shadowy, intellectual figments, symbols which have survived their significance. Even Puck and the rest of the English fairy hierarchy have

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for centuries been the puppets of literary convention.

In Canada the modern mind is placed in circumstances approximating those of the primitive myth-makers; and as indicating its reaction, shown in its attitude towards contemporary movements in the world of "civilisation," Canadian literature has a value to anyone interested in the history of culture. Canadian authors are familiar with the whole body of tradition in which the imaginative faculty of the race has manifested itself. But they see it in a new perspective. As I have already suggested, the European author is brought up in an atmosphere saturated with history. The country is overlaid with monuments of human handiwork, and even the natural landmarks gain their importance from the events or legends associated with them. Added to this are the restricted traditions pertaining to each nation and to each caste of society. The individual is early equipped with a complete system of national, social, and religious dogmas, and even the unusual man who later attempts to reorganise the system according to his own rational faculty can seldom get rid entirely of preconceptions.

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In the last couple of generations there has been a certain emancipation of the mind in one at least of these fields—the religious. As we all know, anthropology, archaeology, and the physical sciences have precipitated a reaction from the strict doctrinal religion of previous centuries. The Hebraic antecedents of Christianity are seen in a new light, and Paganism is no longer a synonym for iniquity. Canadian writers have the benefit of this new sense of proportion, and in addition they have a similar advantage in regard to social and national dogmas. Theirs is a country where the immigrant of aristocratic descent has had to compete on equal terms with the humblest crofter or artisan, and the latter classes have contributed much that is finest in the developed national stock. Similarly, barriers of nationality have diminished: in addition to the three-fold populace of Indian, French, and British, there are settlers from many European countries, and all have found co-operation imperative in the struggle for existence.

So the Canadian has an opportunity of estimating dispassionately the vast accumulation of tradition which forms modern civilisation, in order to select and retain whatever appeals to

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him as appropriate to the new country. And he has the further advantage of making this estimate by standards derived from an intimate knowledge of primitive nature. In Canada three hundred years of history have scarcely made an impression on the immense and ancient mountains and lakes and plains. Tracts as large as European countries are still unexplored. The inhabitants seem to be precariously perched on a monster not yet conscious of their presence, and if they were to relinquish the perpetual effort of maintaining a foothold their mushroom cities and sporadic cultivation would vanish more rapidly than they have appeared. From childhood surrounded by this vastness and potentiality of nature, the Canadian becomes aware of it long before his education in the traditions of culture begins. Since his sympathy with nature is practically an inbred trait he instinctively responds to those features of religion, myth, or philosophy that retain some meaning as interpretations of Ancient Earth and man's relationship to her. Even Marjorie Pickthall, the Canadian poet least intimate with nature and most deeply imbued with both classical and Christian tradition, brings to those concepts a freshness and

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reality that might seem impossible in this late era. "The Little Fauns to Proserpine" and "The Young Baptist" are true to the spirit of Hellas and Judaea because they are true to the spirit of Canada.

Using a symbolism selected from myth and religion, the Canadian poets embody a pantheistic outlook derived largely from various mystical poets and philosophers of the past, but vitalised and unified by genuine communion with nature in her pristine power, where civilisation has never intruded her confusions. Such a contribution to the vexed and complicated problems of present-day life, when the war of churchman and scientist leaves the uninitiated with little but bewilderment, and when much of contemporary literature seems equally chaotic, is not to be lightly passed by.

III

The Significance of Canadian Literature



HERETOFORE I have been considering the value of Canadian literature from the standpoint of the general reader who, unconcerned with minutiae of technique and currents of literary history, accepts any work of literature on its own merits of entertainment and interest. However, there is also in any literature, genuinely worthy of the name, a particular interest for the literary student, who approaches it from what may almost be termed the scientific point of view. For the general reader Canadian literature has an intrinsic appeal on the grounds which justify any literature for existing: it interests by depicting definite places and conditions of life; it delights by recreating human character in contact with environment; and it gives the deeper, less definable sense of enlightenment which helps

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somehow to interpret the inscrutable riddle of life. To the literary student it offers a fascinating field for the study of influences, and heretofore no systematic effort has been made towards a scientific analysis of the country's literary output. In this unexploited field of research he will find which English and foreign writers of the century were most potent in affecting the new-world mind; how these influences could be fused and transmuted; the extent to which culture and literary tradition can be transplanted, and how large a part the new environment plays in the resulting scion.

As I have remarked, in poetry the subordination of Canadian material to external conventions has been less complete than in fiction.

It is true that during the early part of the nineteenth century formalism prevailed. One Oliver Goldsmith, relative of the more famous bearer of the name, wrote "The Rising Village," in which Sweet Auburn was resuscitated in the western hemisphere; and the styles of Goldsmith and Moore—the latter visited Canada in person and wrote there his well-known "Boat Song"—for many years monopolised the poets of Canada, except in certain Scottish

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settlements, where Burns was the deity. In the last twenty years of the century, however, a group of poets began to produce work of greater significance. The chief names in this group were Isabella Valancy Crawford, Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts, Duncan Campbell Scott, Archibald Lampman, W. H. Drummond, and Pauline Johnson. The two latter may be considered first, as they stand apart somewhat from the others. Both depicted in verse the life of certain isolated elements in the Canadian population—Dr. Drummond the French-Canadian “habitant” and Pauline Johnson the Indian. They accordingly may be classed as objective poets, whereas the others of the group are primarily reflective. It is not unprofitable to compare the situation with the greater poetic revival in England a century before, where the objective type was represented by Scott and the reflective by the Lake School. Drummond and Pauline Johnson embody the picturesqueness of the “habitant” and the Indian as Scott embodied the picturesqueness of the Highlander; Lampman and Carman interpret nature through intimate communion with her, as Wordsworth did. The analogy between the two eras may be carried

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farther: as in the romantic revival a younger generation arose in the persons of Keats and Shelley, concerned with neither picturesqueness nor philosophizing but with quintessential beauty, so in Canada arose the younger poets, Marjorie Pickthall and Wilson MacDonald. One hesitates to protract an analogy too far, but the temptation is irresistible to discover a Canadian Byron in Robert Service. Not only in his chronological place in the movement, but in the nature and extent of his popular appeal, Service stands in Canadian poetry as Byron stood in the romantic revival.

I do not mean to imply that the Canadian poets in any way reproduced their great English forebears, except in the very general sense in which any work of literature reveals more or less clearly recognisable traces of the whole literary development that has preceded it. In reading the Canadian poets one is conscious of the tradition of English literature whence they are sprung—the luxury of Keats, the ecstasy of Shelley, the seriousness of Wordsworth, the naïveté of Blake, can all be identified—but it is not possible to label any Canadian poet as a disciple of any one of them. The various echoes are mingled in a harmonious

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pattern, the various points of view are merged into a consistent panorama.

A somewhat more definite influence is to be found when one compares Canadian poetry with that of the Victorian period; it is here that the work of the Canadians has its chief value as a conveniently isolated section of modern poetry, forming an epitome of the currents which produced, during the nineteenth century, a profound change in the character of poetry with respect to both form and outlook. Tennyson is a pervasive spirit, not often tangibly present but nearly always making the reader subconsciously aware that he has existed. So far as form was concerned he established a standard of metrical perfection and deliberate artistry that still very widely prevails. However, his manipulation of verbal music was eclipsed by Swinburne, who revealed the wholly unexpected capacity of the English language for luxurious sounds and entrancing rhythms. Something of Swinburne's melody, as well as something of his paganism, is permanently incorporated in Canadian poetry. Towards the end of the century there was a reversion in English poetry to simpler types, such as the swinging tunes of

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Kipling and the artless metres of Stevenson; Stevenson's tenderness and gaiety and vagabondage seem to have an affinity for the Canadian spirit, and there are several obvious "Canadian Kiplings." The influence of contemporary authors cannot yet be satisfactorily determined: certain recent characteristics may safely be accredited to John Masefield, and elsewhere there are parallels with Alfred Noyes, but beyond that one should not undertake to be specific.

In the characteristic type of Canadian poetry the effects of all these styles can be traced. Perhaps the strongest single influence is that of Stevenson. There are intangible reminiscences of Tennyson in a certain conscious preciousness of diction, and of Swinburne in the effective use of feminine rhymes and fluent metres, but the freshness and directness of Stevenson interpenetrates them all. The preciousness preponderates in Duncan Campbell Scott, the fluency in Marjorie Pickthall, and the Stevensonian norm is exemplified by the Canadian poet who has enjoyed the widest popularity in the United States, Bliss Carman.

Concurrently with the poetic fashions of England during the Victorian period there was growing up the revolutionary movement which

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had its chief exponent in Walt Whitman. It is significant that in matters of form the influence of Whitman has been in Canada so slight. The Canadian poets have not attempted to interpret their country through poems as rugged and uncontrolled as the country itself. The chief success of Whitman's style, as I have already implied, was in the conveying of America's young civilisation, with its diffuseness, its breathless hurry, its lack of poise. Canadian poets, on the other hand, are little concerned with human institutions; their country is still characterised by the dominance of nature, and to represent the effect of nature on the human mind a simple and regular metrical pattern seems to be more appropriate than more complex or irregular rhythms. It is probable, nevertheless, that Whitman is responsible for a certain liberation in the handling of forms, to about the same degree that Swinburne is responsible for a certain accession of melody: the two seem to counterbalance one another in the modern Canadian rhythms, such as these:

Here in the pungent gloom
Where the tamarac roses glow,
And the balsam burns its perfume,
A vireo turns his slow

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Cadence, as if he gloated
Over the last phrase he floated;
Each one he moulds and mellows,
Matching it with his fellows:
So have you noted
How the oboe croons,
The canary throated,
In the gloom of the violoncellos
And bassoons.

But afar in the thickset forest
I hear a sound go free,
Crashing the stately neighbours
The pine and cedar tree,
Horns and harps and tabors,
Drumming and harping and horning
In savage minstrelsy—
It wakes in my soul a warning
Of the wind of destiny.

My life is soaring and swinging
In triple walls of quiet,
In my heart there is rippling and ringing
A song with melodious riot,
When a fateful thing comes nigh it
A hush falls, and then
I hear in the thickset world
The wind of destiny hurled
On the lives of men.

The foregoing is by Duncan Campbell
Scott. The following is the opening of "The

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Cry of the Song Children," by Wilson MacDonald:

Say not I write to a metre's measure
Who gather my words in flood.
Say not I write for the lilting's pleasure,
For lo! my ink is blood.
Oh, if these lines could show my passion:
Look, is the blood not rich and red?
I will pour it out till my soul is ashen
And my grief lies dead.

I am a fragment of restless wind
Against the peak of a mountain broken.
My heart is oft with the snow entwined
And wears as a sweet token,
Wherever I move, or ever I run,
The sting of the frost and the kiss of the sun,
To show that I favour no pilgrim more
Than the next who knocks at my cheerful
door.

However, the influence of Whitman is probably stronger on thought than on form. The other leading American influences are those of Emerson, who contributes something of his transcendental philosophy, and Thoreau, who sets a model of the loving observation and depiction of nature. But Whitman's hardy pantheistic creed, his joy in nature and sense

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of identification with her, his quality of "cosmic consciousness", are fundamental in the Canadian poetic outlook. His gospel of brotherhood is there too, especially in the work of Wilson MacDonald, Robert Norwood, and Albert Smythe. It is not to be assumed, however, that the direct influence of Whitman is responsible for all the resemblances to his creed that appear in Canadian poetry. Rather, both he and the Canadian poets are the product of the great movements of the human mind which occurred during the nineteenth century. The chief of these movements were so closely correlated that they can scarcely be classified separately: the advances in scientific knowledge which found their synthesis in the theory of evolution, and the invasion of the fortress of religion by positivism, free-thinking, and other rationalistic doctrines, forced men to seek a new conception of existence.

The effect of this intellectual revolution upon English poetry was incalculable. The whole attitude of man towards the universe was affected. A complete revaluation of poetic concepts and symbols was entailed, and it happened that the poets of the period were particularly impressed by the seriousness of

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their mission as spiritual advisors. Since physical science had challenged the authority of the Bible, and ethnology had advanced suggestions as to the origins of religion, all spiritual values seemed to be in the balance. On the one hand, certain poets set up the cult of pagan hedonism, of which the first manifesto was Fitzgerald's translation of the "Rubaiyat", followed by the early work of Swinburne. Closely related to this development was a fresh vitalising of classical mythology. If the Hellenic religion had sprung from the same human instincts as the Hebraic, it was equally worthy of respect; so Swinburne and other poets hymned the Greek gods with a passion which would have seemed ludicrous to earlier generations. On the other hand, more conservative poets, led by Tennyson, undertook to reconcile the new scientific theories with the doctrines of Christianity. The same impulse caused the appearance of cults which interpreted the scientific concepts mystically, with the aid of oriental philosophies. Both the tendencies that I have outlined survived till the end of the century, the epicurean in Wilde and the decadents, the mystic in Yeats and the neo-Celts.

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These developments in English poetry help to explain the outlook which characterises the Canadian poets. The two tendencies become fused when brought into contact with primitive nature, and in the resulting compound the mystical element predominates. The epicurean element appears as a cheerful acceptance of man's insignificance in the physical universe. The revitalising of classical mythology provides an appropriate symbolism for the powers of nature which play so important a rôle. The freshness imparted to the ancient symbols by their new contact with nature may be exemplified by Marjorie Pickthall's exquisite poem, "The Little Fauns to Proserpine":

Browner than the hazel husk, swifter than the
wind,
Though you turn from heath and hill, we are
hard behind,
Singing, "Ere the sorrows rise, ere the gates
unclose,
Bind above your wistful eyes the memory of a
rose."

Dark Iacchus pipes the kine shivering from the
whin,
Wraps him in a she-goat's fell above the
panther skin.

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Now we husk the corn for bread, turn the mill
for hire,
Hoof by hoof and head by head about the
herdsman's fire.

Ai, Adonis, where he gleams, slender and at
rest,
One has built a roof of dreams where the white
doves nest;
Ere they bring the wine-dark bowl, ere the
gates unbar,
Take, O take within your soul the shadow of
a star.

Now the vintage feast is done, now the melons
glow
Gold along the raftered thatch beneath a
thread of snow.
Dian's bugle bids the dawn sweep the upland
clear
Where we snared the silken fawn, where we
ran the deer.

Through the dark reeds wet with rain, past
the singing foam,
Went the light-foot Mysian maids, calling
Hylas home.
Syrinx felt the silver spell fold her at her need,
Hear, ere yet you say farewell, the wind along
the reed.

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Golden as the earliest leaf loosened from the
spray,

Grave Alcestis drank of grief for her lord's
delay.

Ere you choose the bitter part, learn the
changeless wrong,

Bind above your breaking heart the echo of a
song.

Now the chestnut burrs are down, aspenshaws
are pale;

Now across the plunging reef reels the last red
sail.

Ere the wild black horses cry, ere the night has
birth,

Take, ere yet you say goodbye, the love of all
the earth.

But it is really impossible to dissociate the classical and hedonistic elements from the mystical ones. Pan to the Canadian poets represents the great spirit permeating all nature, and man's insignificance in the physical world merges into his metaphysical ecstasy of unity with that spirit. The essential change in poetic outlook during the nineteenth century was that man ceased to be the centre of a universal stage which had been prepared

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for his especial occupation, and became a mere product of the same forces which had shaped the rest of the cosmos. This concept, however, was capable of two diverse interpretations; it might mean that man was dragged down to the material level, and could not hope for any pleasures beyond the immediate gratification of the senses; but it might also mean that all material nature was raised to the level of the spiritual quality which man has always intuitively felt within him. There was no doubt as to which interpretation should be adopted in Canada. In such immediate and inevitable contact with natural forces at their mightiest, the hedonist cannot long survive; on the contrary, the human mind in such surroundings almost invariably feels the presence of some unseen entity immanent in all natural phenomena. Such is the creed of the Canadian poets. Lampman always refers to Earth as the Mother from whom all wisdom is drawn; Bliss Carman, following the same idea, calls the birds and the grasses his brethren, endowing the words of St. Francis with an added significance as he uses them in the connotation of nineteenth century thought. In such poems

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as "Overlord" Carman gives voice to the sense of unity with the natural forces:

Lord of the grass and hill,
Lord of the rain,
White Overlord of Will,
Master of pain,

I who am dust and air
Blown through the halls of death
Like a pale ghost of prayer,—
I am thy breath.

Lord of the blade and leaf,
Lord of the bloom,
Sheer Overlord of grief,
Master of doom,

Lonely as wind or snow,
Through the vague world and dim,
Vagrant and glad I go,
I am thy whim.

Lord of the storm and lull,
Lord of the sea,
I am thy broken gull
Blown far alee.

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Lord of the harvest dew,
Lord of the dawn,
Star of the paling blue
Darkling and gone,

Lost on the mountain height,
Where the first winds are stirred,
Out of the wells of night
I am thy word.

Lord of the haunted hush
Where raptures throng,
I am thy hermit thrush
Ending no song.

Lord of the frost and cold,
Lord of the North,
When the red sun grows old
And day goes forth,

I shall put off this girth,—
Go glad and free,
Earth to my mother earth,
Spirit to thee.

In many other poems of Carman, and in those of his cousin, Charles Roberts, this feeling of communion with the immanent spirit of nature

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is rapturously expressed. A subsequent chapter will undertake a more detailed analysis of what the leading Canadian poets hold to be the meaning of life and the explanation of man's place in the universe.

In these and other respects Canadian poetry forms an interesting summary of the changes affecting English poetry during the nineteenth century. The fusion of those tendencies and the modifications imposed upon them by the circumstances of Canadian life render the reading of Canadian poetry particularly fascinating to the investigator, who should be saved from the pedantry to which the specialist is prone by the persistent charm of his material.

So much for the development of Canadian literature during the past thirty or forty years, and its relation to the general movements of thought in that period. In conclusion, one may venture to define the present status of Canadian literature and prophesy its immediate future. There seems to be little doubt that at the present time literature in both England and the United States is entering a period of classicism. Outstanding characteristics of current books are the attention to problems of form, the cultivation of intellectual conceits and

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elaborate images, the practise of satire, and the general subordination of feeling to cerebration. That these qualities are manifested through free verse rather than through the heroic couplet is purely incidental; although the trappings are of the twentieth century, the spirit is as Augustan as when it promenaded the court of Queen Anne. These qualities, however, are the outcome of highly developed culture, which finds the focus of its interest in human institutions and the intricacies of social relations rather than in the emotional side of man which is primitive and irrational. In Canada the emotional qualities cannot be very successfully subdued. No artificial mechanism of society has yet been perfected to distract man's attention from his primitive reactions. So the Canadian poet is instinctively a romantic. Probably this is the reason why neither the novel nor the drama has taken root in the country: they are sophisticated forms, and Meredith's theory of comedy applies in a considerable degree to fiction as well. If a distinctive form of fiction arises in Canada, it will probably follow the lines adumbrated by the two most effective novels which have been produced in the country, one

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French and the other English—"Maria Chapdelaine" by Louis Hémon and "The Bridge" by Marjorie Pickthall. They are nearer to the epic or the folk-tale than to the English novel, in that they depict man's conflict with the natural forces—internal and external—rather than his relations with his fellows.

It is improbable that any sudden shift will occur in the proportion of natural and artificial elements in Canadian life. So one may venture to predict that, for some time to come, Canadian literature will provide a refreshing haven of genuine romanticism to which the reader may retreat when he seeks an antidote to the intellectual tension imposed by the future progeny of "The Waste Land" and "Spoon River."

IV

The Fatal Gift



TO anyone who asks the question, "What is wrong with Canadian literature?" no satisfactory answer presents itself. That something is retarding the advent of real literary achievement in this country is apparent, but the nature of the impediment, or incubus, or whatever it may be, remains obscure. We have been told that we can have no good literature until we become politically autonomous, or until we learn to sin joyfully, or until we consent to starve for the glory of perfection, or until we cease to use the English language; but such pronouncements, whether their tone be pedantic or cynical, are little to the purpose. Analogy shows us that aesthetic achievement does not depend, in the last analysis, on any particular form of administration, or moral standard, or material circumstances: certainly not on the discovery of a new language to exploit.

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Of course, no one can be so presumptuous as to assert why the mystic Pentecost of genius occurs, or where, or when. But without attempting to analyse the impalpable and transcendent flame, one may nevertheless try to determine what shall constitute the shrine that might be made ready for its possible habitation. To vary the figure, could this pool of Bethesda, about which we are all waiting so eagerly, be stirred by the unseen visitant, or must it first be purged of that which renders it turgid and sluggish?

Confronting with all possible frankness the query, if a literary genius were to arise to-day in Canada could he express himself through the modes now existing? One hesitates to reply "yes." But no one is justified in proceeding to deduce, as certain literary sansculottes in the United States have done, that the existing forms must be abandoned, in favor of the visioned panacea "vers libre", or some other entirely emancipated and virgin mode of expression. It is not in forms that the work of reclamation must be instituted.

We are not seeking to say something new—a fallacy which persists in defiance of critics since Solomon—but to give more adequate ex-

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pression to the old thing, to the thing older than old, the eternal. For this we do not need new forms, nor emancipation from forms: how often has it occurred that when men felt that "all we can say is said," somebody has quietly set about saying a thing supremely significant, and saying it in the ancient forms that had become the playthings of triflers. It is not the form that is a writer's contribution to the heritage of his kind, but what he puts into it. The form develops naturally, and the more definite and familiar the form, the less will the reader's attention be distracted from the content.

If one were to choose from Canadian literature the single poem of highest importance, a poem that has filled its essential function of moving and inspiring every reader, and has at the same time retained the approval of the critics, that poem would be "In Flanders Fields." Yet it is written in one of the strictest of those old French forms, of which the composition had long been relegated to the category of "jeux d'esprit." Probably not a tithe of those who responded to the poem had ever heard of a *rondeau*, but the significant fact is that the critics had so utterly dismissed the *rondeau* from their consciousness that some

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of them failed to recognize it, and one at least devoted much attention to analysing the rhyme-scheme and structure of this form which John McCrae had evolved!

I am not making a plea for restricted forms. I merely wish to clear the approach to my subject by stating that "In Flanders Fields", or a sonnet like Lampman's "There is a beauty at the goal of life" derives neither advantage nor disadvantage from its formal strictness when compared with the simplest metres of Carman or Duncan Campbell Scott.

That which endowed John McCrae with such potency was primarily of course that element which I have already declared my inability to discuss—the intensity of emotion, the clarity of vision, in which true poetry is brought forth. It is to the secondary quality of the poem that we must confine our attention, the quality which makes it so difficult for us to realise the strictness of the form. And this quality is supreme simplicity. Every word is brief and entirely familiar; not a phrase is distorted or far-fetched; with utmost directness, with rigorous economy, the poet conveys his thought and emotion in the words that seem inevitable; their pellucid clarity

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opposes no barrier to our communion with the mind of the poet.

This is the very crux of the situation. Most of our writers are hampered by their riches: their vocabulary is too extensive. It is not expression which they should cultivate, but repression. "In Flanders Fields" and its equally brief sequel are the fruit of twenty years' apprenticeship. Throughout that period the pages of the best Canadian journals were open to John McCrae, yet his whole production scarcely fills a slim volume. Contrast that with the bibliographies of our other writers—writers of fiction particularly, but of verse also to a large extent. The inference need not be elaborated.

The man who undertakes to write to-day has too many words at his command. Impressive words and whole glib phrases are stored profusely in his memory and transfer themselves thence on to paper with scarcely an effort of the intellect. All the languages of the world have been rifled to enrich him, and he uses them as a parvenue who appears jewel-decked at the breakfast table. His words and phrases are lifeless shells from which the vitality has been sucked by generations of vam-

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pirous writers and speakers. Or they are coins from which all traces of value and origin are effaced through constant usage. Words have ceased to be the winged and glowing embodiment of thought; they are pretentious masks, through the eyes of which no intelligence peers forth.

Even the more ephemeral productions of French literature possess a charm and distinction of style that is lacking in similar works of our language. The French vocabulary being far more restricted than ours, the French writer must deny himself the luxury of synonyms. Every word is rigorously confined to its particular shade of meaning, and in compensation for this discipline it retains the full force and value of its connotation. An English word, picked at random from half a dozen others vaguely signifying the same idea, has no such accuracy. As the Frenchman enunciates his consonants more clearly and his vowels more purely than we, so does he select his words with a clarity and purity that puts us to shame.

If our language is to be vitalised, then, it must first be condensed. If the force that is now dissipated through a plethora of jejune

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words and platitudinous similes is to regain any effectual potency it will have to be concentrated. The words to be selected for retention in this new vocabulary must be those which are vitally in touch with life, and not rendered moribund by the glib tongue of politics, the facile typewriter of the press. They must be rooted strongly in the ageless earth, they must breathe their sustenance from the atmosphere of free imagination and the unchanging human feelings.

The "man in the street", we are told, has a working vocabulary of only a few hundred words. Is he, then, the exemplar of our ideal? Unhappily he has been exposed too long to the platform and the newspaper. It is no individual language that he speaks, but a feeble echo of his mentors' diction. This is proved by the fact that when he himself takes up the pen, some malicious demon whispers to him all the turgid phrases that he has heard or read. And as they flow from his pen he mistakes them, in his innocence, for inspiration—oh, bitter irony!—for the Promethean torture! His seven hundred words, for all their impotence, are nearer to it.

When these resources fail him, he ekes out

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his conversation with slang. That a possible salvation lies in slang I am not prepared to deny, but of a certainty it is not in the current slang of this age: at best it is meaningless, and at worst it would be nauseating, were it not uttered in so slipshod and unintelligent a manner that its meaning is obscured. Far different shall be the tongue in which the soul of this land may reveal itself.

The way will be opened when one man, who has in him the seeds of genius, recognises in time that the tares of banality are encroaching by every contact with his contemporaries. He must have the austere passion for perfection that will make him dedicate himself to the most bitter discipline. Some glimpse of this truth has been caught already by a poet, who, for this vision, if by no other right, has justified his title of Canada's laureate. A comparison of "Behind the Arras" with "Later Poems" shows the immense progress that Bliss Carman has made towards simplicity. And there can be little doubt as to which book conveys best the deeper meanings of nature. But the fatal gift of facility is still evidenced in the numerosity of his poems. If the quintessence of "Later Poems" could be uttered in

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half a dozen pages, we might have a masterpiece indeed.

The great task of purification is no impractical vision. It can be done. There is an interesting parallel between the problem of to-day and that which Wordsworth faced. But one need not go beyond the present age to seek examples, for John Synge has done this thing incomparably, and his prefaces give magnificent expression to the ideas I have sought to apply to Canadian literature. We need not leave our own boundaries for an instance of what may be accomplished: Louis Hémon's sojourn at Peribonka produced a work which rises nearer to the confines of unqualified greatness than does the whole combined output of our universities. Whoever can in the English language surpass "Maria Chapdelaine" will have a chance of supplanting what has hitherto been essentially the greatest literary production of this continent—"John Brown's Body."

Canadian Poets and the New Universe



ABOUT the middle of the nineteenth century the intellectual world was rocked by an earthquake which shattered or undermined practically all the symmetrical and traditionally authenticated edifices into which knowledge was at that time partitioned. Too much bewildered to recognise the extent of the damage, most men set about patching up their tottering concepts, and buttressing them against one another; indeed, many of these makeshift ideas survive today, but they are rapidly falling into complete ruin. The "Victorian compromise", to use Mr. Chesterton's phrase, has been in a process of gradual dissolution ever since the great event of 1859.

The publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species" was, of course, merely the focal point

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of forces which had long been maturing in scientific research and philosophic speculation. But as Darwin put the idea of evolution into a concrete form which appealed to the public mind, he stands as the instigator of the vast controversies and readjustments which invaded not only physical science but also ethics, politics, sociology, and religion. The simultaneous publication of "Essays and Reviews" led to the great "higher criticism" battle in the churches; large numbers of people deserted the traditional faiths, resorting first to positivism, agnosticism, and free thinking, and many later reacting towards more mystical creeds which took the idea of evolution into account.

The new theory, embracing in its wider implications an entire revolution in our concept of the universe and man's place in it, had an immediate and profound effect on literature, particularly on poetry. Indeed the poets led the way towards the new evolutionary mysticism, when the orthodox clerics and materialistic scientists showed no signs of coming to terms. The poet in his role of "vates" has to be familiar with the events of his time: not only political and social, but even

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scientific facts—as Wordsworth pointed out in his famous preface—must contribute to his work, transmuted though they be into imaginative and idealistic forms. The poet, it has been said, “interprets the relation between man and the universe in which he finds himself”; and as the scientific knowledge of that universe changes, the poet supplies the spiritual commentary. It has always been one of his chief functions to explain transcendently the current cosmic theories of philosophy and science. The greatest previous revolution in such theories, the supplanting of the Ptolemaic by the Copernican system—a transition responsible for much confusion in “Paradise Lost”—was less epochal than the Darwinian hypothesis. For even when the earth was deprived of its proud centrality, man was still left serenely confident in his importance; indeed he felt all the more superior, since the universe which had been created for him was proved to be so unsuspectedly vast. But the idea of evolution shattered every assumption of the sort: if man were but a more or less accidental production of material forces acting through countless ages, where was his boasted divinity, his immortal soul? To those who

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accepted the new cosmology, materialism seemed an inevitable consequence.

But a materialistic poet is a contradiction in terms. It is true that the Victorian poets were not so narrowly orthodox as to reject the conclusions of science, which appealed to them as eminently plausible. However, they incorporated the scientific theories into a system which included also the less material elements of human existence. Even before science and religion had grasped the implications of the new discoveries, Tennyson and Browning and Arnold were aware of the immense problems which were shaping themselves. The necessity of confronting this basic reorganisation of ideas caused much perturbation to the poets. Arnold, turning to prose, worked out his ideas in "Literature and Dogma"; Browning clung to a vague and elastic faith in the potential glory implied by imperfection; it was Tennyson particularly, an intelligent amateur of science, who felt himself called to be an evangelist for the reconciling of evolution and faith. He first attempted the task in "In Memoriam", and recurred to it frequently until the end of his life.

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To the younger generation of Victorian poets evolution was not an intrusion upon their philosophy; it was their philosophy's very self. Evolution is the key to Swinburne's "Hertha", to Meredith's "Earth and Man", to the "pessimism" of Thomas Hardy. And finally, among contemporary poets, we find the new conception of life fully assimilated: William Watson, John Masefield, A.E., Rupert Brooke, Alfred Noyes, all accept evolution without question as the principle on which they base their various interpretations of life. In short, the evolutionary idea has been the greatest factor in the development of English poetic thought during the nineteenth century, so that contemporary poetry is demarcated from that of the Romantic Revival by an entire change in outlook on nature and human life.

Exactly concurrent with this development has been the other interesting and little studied movement, upon which the present book is based—the extension of English literature into the other parts of the Empire. The years of the great Darwinian controversies witnessed the birth of that generation of poets who have given Canada a voice in literature.

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Brought up in a country comparatively free from established "schools of thought", they had a chance to learn the new principle of evolution without being distracted by the dust and uproar of the combat. Although by reason of this isolation Canada may have been slower to perceive the importance of the new doctrine, yet by the time our poets were receiving their education, evolution had so far emerged from the conflict that a young man of enquiring and independent mind could scarcely fail to encounter it and recognise its vital importance. I do not mean that the Canadian poets consciously adopted the evolutionary theory as a definite concept to be disseminated didactically in verse; but it seems to me highly probable that their outlook would be fundamentally influenced by the new spirit. In support of this "a priori" assumption I intend to examine some typical examples of Canadian poetry for evidence that the evolutionary concept is in the very heart of their philosophy, necessarily transmuted into poetic forms.

In Canada the theory would not impress itself merely as an intellectual exercise, a hypothesis to be co-ordinated with a whole system of philosophy and culture: to a young

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man confronting with awe and almost with dismay the vastness of nature in Canada, and committed to the task of adjusting to it his own self-consciousness in a relationship not utterly ridiculous—a task which must often have seemed veritably overwhelming—the principle of evolution must have come as nothing short of a revelation. Nature could not be to him an assemblage of physical objects, a mere landscape picture, as it was to the eighteenth century; but neither could it be the benevolent and sympathetic attendant on human emotions, as Wordsworth pictured it. To a Canadian of poetic perceptions, nature is an entity, embodying vast and inconceivable forces, shadowing forth some mighty purpose beyond human comprehension. Realising this overwhelming might of nature, the poet's sensitive spirit would be in serious danger of quailing in horror and withdrawing itself to less terrific themes. But the idea of evolution allowed a glimpse of unity pervading nature and control directing her mysterious ways. Intuitively rather than rationally the poet perceived that from such a standpoint he might obtain a vision of life in which man's puny figure and nature's brooding power assumed a

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conceivable proportion, both sub'ordinated to a supernal plan.

In the forests he could see in both vegetable and animal life the struggle for survival in actual operation; in the mountains and cataracts he could trace the very processes by which the face of the globe had been shaped through aeonian action; so the physical arguments in favour of evolution gave him little trouble. He was concerned straightway with the spiritual significance; and the mystical interpretation which he derived partly from philosophy (including the English poetry of the generation which was so seriously pre-occupied with evolutionary theorising) but more largely from the influence of his environment, merges consistently into the scientific arguments. Accordingly we do not find Canadian poets approaching evolution with doubts and misgivings, weighing the "pros and cons" as Tennyson did; nor proclaiming it as a definite doctrine, developed to a logical conclusion, like Meredith's "racial immortality" or Hardy's "Godhead dying downward"; they arrive immediately at the third stage, using evolution implicitly as the basis for their treatment of life and nature.

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A few general topics may be indicated which display the significant contribution of the new cosmology to the distinctive outlook of Canadian poets. The examples cited have been selected with some difficulty from the large quantity of relevant material to be found in the poets' work. To be suitable for illustrative purposes, the passages are necessarily taken from more abstract and reflective poems, but the outlook which they express pervades the other phases of the poetry, although not explicitly declared.

Probably the first effect of the new doctrine was a more intimate sense of kinship with the "lower orders" of nature—with animals and plants, and particularly with the Earth herself. Since man was shown to be no longer a superior being created to enjoy the submission of all other creatures, but had been shaped by the self-same forces from the self-same matter as they, the poet felt himself a brother to the beast and flower, for like them he was a son of the Ancient Mother, Earth. This fresh importance of natural forces and laws has a far-reaching effect. It underlies Lampman's loving descriptions of nature. He is free from the insistence of "human interest" that for-

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merly tyrannised landscape art and nature poetry: Nature is herself the dominant personage, and not a background for the poet's mood. If the human figure appears at all, it is subordinated. This does not mean that the poet is oppressed or alienated; on the contrary, he gladly submits himself to nature's power. Earth is to Lampman always "the mighty mother," "the great mother heart":

Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth,
Mother of all things beautiful, blameless,
Mother of hopes that her strength makes
tameless. . . .

He humbly seeks from her the comfort and
strength which man lacks:

O mother, who wast long before our day,
And after us full many an age shall be,
Careworn and blind, we wander from thy way:
Born of thy strength, yet weak and halt
are we;
Grant us, O mother, therefore, us who pray,
Some little of thy light and majesty.

And earth does not refuse the prayer of her
human children:

Yet thou complainest not, O steadfast Earth,
Beautiful mother with thy stoic fields;

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In all the ages since thy fiery birth
Deep in thine own wide heart thou findest
still

Whatever comforts and whatever shields,
And plannest also for us the same sheer will.

So it is the poet's desire to live with Nature:

as children of one common birth
Discerning in each natural fruit of earth
Kinship and bond with this diviner clay.

Charles G. D. Roberts expresses the same
dependence on the restorative power of Earth:

Fighting at last I have fallen, and sought the
breast of the Mother,—

Quite cast down I have crept close to the
broad sweet earth.

Weary no more, nor faint, nor grieved at heart,
nor despairing,

Hushed in the earth's green lap, lulled to
slumber and dreams!

He knows that his own life is paralleled by
other natural organisms:

The swelling sap that thrilled the wood
Was cousin to my eager blood.

In the poem "Kinship" Roberts treats the

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theme explicitly. Typical stanzas may be quoted:

Back to wisdom take me, Mother;
Comfort me with kindred hands;
Tell me tales the world's forgetting,
Till my spirit understands.

Tell me how some sightless impulse,
Working out a hidden plan,
God for kin and clay for fellow,
Wakes to find itself a man.

The poet feels that wisdom as well as strength is to be regained by communion with the elemental forces through which man has been evolved.

In his poem "To the Rideau River" Wilfred Campbell proclaims himself one of the "souls belated" who is still able to "fare back to earth our great kind mother." In "An August Reverie" he writes:

We are but brothers to the birds and grasses,
In our brief coming and our end the same:—
And though we glory god-like in our day,
Perchance some kindred law their lives obey.

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He states the thought even more clearly in
"The Mystery":

Can it be
That there with man is kindred mystery
Of being, old heredity
Of bud and leaf, of pulsing plant and tree,
And earth and air?

And finally in "Earth" Campbell apostrophises
the "Swart Mother" from whom all life comes
and to whom it returns in perpetual recur-
rence.

Frederick George Scott gives expression to
precisely the same feelings as the foregoing
poets. He, too, flees from the haunts of men
to find solace in "the cradle song of Mother
Earth." He feels his kinship with the trees:

Something in my inmost thinking
Tells me I am one with you,
For a subtle bond is linking
Nature's offspring through and through,
And your spirit like a flood
Stirs the pulses of my blood.

He addresses Nature in her sternest mood:

Thou art in us like a flood,
Welling through our thought and blood—

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Force evolving great from lesser
As the blossom from the bud.

There is space only for a couple of citations
from Duncan Campbell Scott, who lays most
emphasis on the evidences of order in nature:

The god is astir,
Firm and free,
Weaving his plan,
Swelling the tree,
Bracing the man. . . .

And again:

A message comes up to the soul
From the soul of inanimate things:
A message that widens and grows
Till it touches the deeds of man,
Till we see in the torturous throes
Some dawning glimmer of plan.

All these passages, and many more from the
same and other poets, attest the new outlook
of Canadian poets towards Nature, their self-
submission to her power and their recognition
of kinship with Earth and all the processes of
life.

This idea soon merges into another and
equally important one. If man is akin to Earth

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as a physical being, why should Earth not be akin to man as a spiritual being? In the passages previously cited, Earth and Nature were not considered as sentient beings, although they were to some extent personified for the purpose of poetic expression. But in other poems there is assumed the existence of an actual world-soul, immanent in all life as well as in man. This is the metaphysical interpretation of the idea which we have just considered on the material side. It is, indeed, Pantheism, since this world-soul is more or less identified with God. Divine creation of the world and of man is thus reconciled with evolution—the demiurge functioning through physical processes, but not blindly and accidentally as Darwinism suggested. Each man is an incarnated fragment of the omnipresent spirit. This belief, despite superficial variations in symbolism, has always been the essential creed of the mystics—only the slightest changes in interpretation were necessary for adapting it to the circumstances of nineteenth century science. Modern psychology terms the idea “cosmic consciousness”, and it is significant that the authoritative investigation of the subject was by a Canadian, Richard Maur-

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ice Bucke. While he was classifying the records of mystics of all ages who have described their sense of unity with the Absolute, his countrymen were giving new utterance in poetry to the same pantheistic faith.

Lampman, using the Indian mythology, addresses this omnipresent spirit as "Manitou" in "The Lake in the Forest", while in "Pecavi, Domine" he modernises for the same purpose the sublimity of the psalmist:

O Power to whom this earthly clime
Is but an atom in the whole,
O Poet-heart of Space and Time,
O Maker and Eternal Soul,
Within whose glowing rings are bound,
Out of whose sleepless heart had birth
The cloudy blue, the starry round,
And this small miracle of earth:

Who liv'st in every living thing,
And all things are thy script and chart,
Who rid'st upon the eagle's wing,
And yearnest in the human heart;
O Riddle with a single clue,
Love, deathless, protean, secure,
The ever old the ever new,
O Energy, serene and pure. . . .

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It is by our own wilful neglect of communion
with nature that

We forego the power to see
The threads that bind us to the All,
God or the Immensity.
Whereof on the eternal road
Man is but a passing mode.

In the same connection, Charles G. D. Roberts seems to be most deeply impressed by the fact that our human perspective is ridiculous when applied to external objects. The microscope has taught us something of the miracles that occur beyond man's perception, and in "Two Spheres" Roberts points out that the dew-drop and the vastest sun are equally perfect and important creations. The same thought is given epigrammatic form in "Immanence":

Not only in the cataract and the thunder,
Or in the deeps of man's uncharted soul,
But in the dew-star dwells alike the wonder,
And in the whirling dust-mote the Control.

The soul of man is therefore related to the other manifestations of the world-soul in nature:

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I felt the soul of the trees,
Of the white eternal seas,
Of the flickering bats and night-moths
And my own soul kin to these.

But the human soul, Roberts feels, compensates for man's physical insignificance, since it is the highest earthly manifestation of the divine spirit and achieves immortality through that relationship. Roberts addresses the morning star:

How small am I in thine august regard!
Invisible,—and yet I know my worth!
When comes the hour to break this prisoning
shard
And reunite with Him who breathed me
forth,
Then shall this atom of the Eternal Soul
Encompass thee in its benign control!

In "Autochthon" Roberts gives a voice to the immanent spirit, after the manner of Swinburne's "Hertha", proclaiming it the energy which pervades all the operations of nature, swelling the grain, shaping the stature of a man, dwelling in the tempest and the dew-fall.

As the poetry of Bliss Carman is so well

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known, it has not hitherto been cited in this chapter, although all the points discussed have been particularly applicable to his work. In "Our Lady of the Rain" he identifies Spring with the primal impulse that "called the world from chaos":

She saw the red clay moulded
And quickened into man;
The sweetness of her spirit
Within his pulses ran. . . .

Again he speaks of how

creatures of the field and tide
That reckon not, yet aspire,
Our brothers of the tardy hope,
Put forth their strength in senses dim,
Threading the vast, they know not why,
Through aeons up to Him.

Such examples are typical of the consistently evolutionary tone of Carman's poetry. "Overlord," "Make Me Over, Mother April," "Pulvis et Umbra", these and a host of other poems must recur to any student of his work as illustrative of his sense of man's physical kinship with Nature and of Nature's spiritual kinship with man, and of the evolutionary principle which accounts for both.

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The same thoughts have been expressed by so many other poets that no attempt at enumeration can be made here. And there are various other ideas, logically deduced from the foregoing, which must also be neglected. For instance, there is fresh justification for the idea of human brotherhood: prejudices of creed or caste lose their potency when compared with the wider unity of racial development. To seek the best elements in all human life and thought, to help the progress of the whole race by mutual service and understanding, becomes an ideal of supreme importance. It is the theme of Wilson MacDonald's "Song of Brotherhood", "Song of Better Understanding", and "Barbary." Robert Norwood chants it in "A Song of the All", "A Song of the New Gods", and elsewhere. It is expressed by Albert Smythe in "The Burden of the World" and in other poems. Albert Durrant Watson proclaimed it in many forms. In the Whitman vein Watson described "The Measure of a Man":

He builds his life with love and gladness
Into the structure of the universe,
Co-operating with all manhood true

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To make humanity divine,
For he who is unbrotherly is guilty of all
crimes.

But more frequently Watson referred to the spiritual principle of brotherhood by the word "Love", spelling it with a capital letter to distinguish it from the physical desires. In "The Hills of Life", "The Aureole", and many other poems he envisaged the golden age which will come when selfishness is conquered and Christ-like love is universal.

Another side of the idea is emphasised by Tom MacInnes, one of the most original and fascinating Canadian poets, whose jaunty philosophy is thoroughly evolutionary. Like the poets just named, he proclaims in "A Ballade of Friends" that no conventional barriers restrict his sense of fraternity:

No talk of race or caste or creed;
No fault of hair, no shade of skin,
Shall bar me of my choice, indeed
The sweetest nut may lie within
The toughest shell; 'twould be a sin
To lose a comrade, or resign
My company for cause so thin:
All good fellows are friends of mine!

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More frequently, however, he stresses the other implication—individualism; that every man must mould his own fate according to his own best powers, and should tolerantly allow his fellows the right of similarly developing themselves. If evolution depends on “the survival of the fittest”, sentimental humanitarianism is a detriment to the race’s progress. It is individualism which MacInnes praises in “To Walt Whitman”, and he summarises the idea in his “Ballade of Meddlers”:

For man and beast and imp and elf

One rule is writ in language terse:

Each must answer to himself

In the sequence of the universe:

And we may crawl from the primal curse

Fast if we choose, or leisurely,

But meddlers aye make matters worse:

Go your way and let folk be!

But it is time to consider the poetic treatment of the evolutionary hypothesis itself. The first part of this analysis has been concerned with the almost subconscious readjustment of outlook which the poets made in order to be in accord with new cosmic theories. Apart from this, they were also putting into poetry their speculations about the

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actual evolution of the race, and the vital problem of its relation to the character and immortality of the spiritual element in man. They all, in accepting the evolutionary hypothesis, undertake to reconcile it with the existence of a soul. The physical body, they admit, has been developed from lower forms of life; even the mind of man is the product of heredity—he is “heir of the ages” with all the past achievements of the human mind as his rightful property. But the soul which takes up a temporary residence within this evolved mechanism, being a fragment of the unconditioned World-soul, is immortal. Each individual soul may have evolved to its present status, perhaps on other planes of being, perhaps through successive incarnations, as Albert Smythe suggests, and Robert Norwood in “A Song of Evolution”, and many others in occasional passages. But all agree that the soul, having existed in the Infinite before matter came into being, and destined to remerge in the infinite, transcends physical bounds and justifies Roberts’ phrase, “the august infinitude of man.”

It follows, obviously, that evolution is the creative and administrative method of the

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Universal Spirit, and the poets generally use the Christian terminology in speaking of that Spirit as God. This is no place to broach the "Modernist vs. Fundamentalist" duel that in some quarters rages as fiercely today as when "Essays and Reviews" appeared in 1860. We are only concerned with the fact that the poets, in adopting the new system, expanded their religious concepts to accord with it; the task was easier for them than for other men, for the poets' mystical faith has always been nearer to this sublimated pantheism than the established creeds have been.

There are two outstanding notions which the poets contribute to the evolutionary theory—or which the evolutionary theory contributes to the poets, for the relation is mutual. One is that the process was conceived and initiated by God, so that every phase has its meaning in the divine plan; the other is that the process is not yet complete—that man's progress to his present form is infinitesimal in comparison with the progress which he must still make before perfection is attained. As Lampman says:

Yet the eyes are dim, nor wholly
Open to the golden gleam,

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And the brute surrenders slowly
To the Godhead and the dream.

But man has a clear duty in this scheme of things. It is for him to strive his best towards perfection, for although it may be infinitely distant, yet every effort towards it avails, and as Wilfred Campbell points out in "The Dream Divine", the apparently futile aspirations of one age are accomplished by posterity. This duty Lampman proclaims in "The Clearer Self" and "The Largest Life":

So to address our spirits to the height,
And so attune them to the valiant whole,
That the great light be clearer for our light,
And the great soul the stronger for our soul.

A mere enumeration of some poems must suffice to show how many of the Canadian poets have treated aspects of the theme. Those of Bliss Carman are too numerous to be specified, but one may refer to Roberts' "Origins" and "Child of the Infinite"; Wilfred Campbell's "The Question", "Invocation", "The Message of Night"; Duncan Campbell Scott's "Improvisation on an old Song." Beneath a whimsical mask Tom MacInnes speaks as seriously as they in "The Ballade of the Mystic and the

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Mud", "Ballade of Virtues", and others. Robert Norwood devotes a group of Whitmanesque poems to the topic, and it underlies all his poetry. The same remark applies to Albert Durrant Watson, whose most extensive works on the theme are "Love and the Universe" and "To Worlds More Wide." It applies also to A. M. Stephen, who identifies the World-soul with the principle of love and beauty, as in "The Awakening" which describes how the dawning sense of beauty raised man from primitive kinship with "the mindless monsters", and in "Superman" which predicts the race's continued progress beyond its present "forms of clay" to identity with God. The principle is of great significance to Frederick George Scott in "The Burden of Time", "A Dream of the Prehistoric", and "A Song of Triumph." His poem named "Evolution", particularly, is a striking exposition of the spiritual implications in the scientific theory. Along with it, special mention must be made of Annie C. Dalton's "Flame and Adventure", in which all points which I have been indicating are treated with admirable independence, directness, and imaginative power.

My thesis could be substantiated by material

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from other poets, but the effort of selection and the expenditure of space are scarcely justified. The general conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing evidence may be applied to most of the Canadian poets' work. I hope to have shown that they are adequate interpreters of the modern world into which they have been born. Their principal ideas are fundamentally different from those of a century ago. In response to the challenge of science they have produced a mystical system which is consistent with the scientific theories and yet gives fresh significance to the spiritual element.

They have obtained a new vision of man in space and time. His figure stands forth from a background of the incalculable generations that have prepared the way for him, each contributing something to his present status. He is the contact point between his eventful past and his lofty future. He is rendered insignificant alike by the magnitude of the universe and the minute perfection of the atom, yet his spiritual greatness is somehow attested by his potential identity with the universal spirit. He has gained fresh responsibility from the knowledge of his task of service in the cause of

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racial advancement; he has gained fresh humility from his sense of kinship with the other children of earth, begotten by the same forces as himself; he has gained fresh grandeur from his sense of identity with God.

VI

The Case of the Lyrical Lyric



HERE is a widely accepted heresy current at the present day to the effect that poetry must contain thought: that the originality or profundity of the idea expressed is the touchstone for determining the success or failure of every poem. Partly, no doubt, this is due to the academic desire for interpretation and exegesis; the teacher or the commentator feels that he is not fulfilling his function unless he can translate a poem into knotty prose and analyse it and trace its affiliations through all philosophy.

But the desire for ideas in poetry is not confined to the professional anatomists of literature; readers of every rank seem to be unanimous in thinking that poetry must deal with the gravest problems or most abstruse concepts. In confirmation of this statement, I

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need only refer to the popularity of Edgar A. Guest, unquestionably considered the only readable poet by the vast majority of people in North America. His verse invariably "philosophises"; it has a "message", it expounds generalities upon the profoundest things of life. Fortunately for Mr. Guest, his work has a magnificent banality which makes it comprehensible to the multitude. Admirably illustrative is his recent effusion, on the sufficiently philosophical subject of "Time":

The clock strikes and another hour begins,
Time's army marches by in single file,
Seemingly heedless of our virtues, sins,
The frown of man or woman's lovely smile,
And none so wise, so rich, or so distraught,
As this brief hour to lengthen or cut short.

'Tis ten o'clock; in sixty minutes more
Eleven will ring upon the morning air,
As calm and certain as the hour before,
Unchanged by laughter or unmoved by care;
Not one in all that endless line of hours
Will pause or hurry for some whim of ours.

Sunrise and sunset, generals of the day,
Man cannot bribe or threaten or control;
Storm, nor disaster, nor despair, can stay
Or change one second of the mighty whole.
Time will press on though nations rise or fall,
The passing hour is master of us all.

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So much for the lower stratum of poetic appreciation. In revulsion from the egregious truisms of the Guest type, the "intelligentsia" make their poetry a frantic quest for novelty and surprise. The Sitwells in England, Edna Millay and Eleanor Wylie in America, are typical of the attempt to be original at any cost: far-fetched allusions, tortured images, flippant or cynical treatment of emotion—these are the results of the desperate effort to avoid the obvious and the commonplace.

There is a third class, that of the enlightened conservative lovers of poetry, maintaining the tradition of beauty and truth in literature; but they too are widely infected with the delusion about philosophy. They are devoted to Browning and Meredith and Whitman, and demand of every poem that it be susceptible of elucidation and analysis.

The reason for this extensive belief in the essential thoughtfulness of poetry probably lies partly in the unquiet questing spirit of the present age, feverishly seeking a new explanation of life since so many long-accepted axioms have been suddenly discredited; partly in the ever-widening chasm between printed poetry and the sung or spoken lyric. A poem in cold

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type, which can be interrupted with pauses for thought, and read several times whenever necessary, seems slight and trivial if it does not contain a tangible idea. At the present day the lyric has to compete on equal terms with the other poetic genera, which have greater intellectual content; but the lyric was never intended to undergo such an ordeal. A lyrical form embodying a philosophical theory is a modern hybrid which is often effective by its incongruity, as in Edna St. Vincent Millay; but I am convinced that it will be fatal to poetry if the element of thought ever comes to be considered an essential attribute of lyric poetry. Admittedly the quality of thought is indispensable in the didactic and reflective forms of poetry, and, to a somewhat less degree, in the epic; but the lyric is in a different category. Originally, the determining factor in its composition was the fact that it was to be sung, since this fact imposed certain distinct limitations: first, that it must have a definite rhythm and a beauty of sound-effects; secondly, that it should be easily comprehensible on the first hearing.

The latter qualification was responsible for much in the lyric theme; lyric poetry tended to

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treat of the primal, universal things—love, death, beauty—and to treat them emotionally rather than intellectually. Of course, the emotional appeal of the music enhanced that of the words; but even in itself the ideal lyric has the same qualities both of sound and of feeling which music possesses in a higher degree. And in general emotional appeal is antithetical to originality of idea. As soon as the hearer's mind is disturbed by any unfamiliar thought or any novelty of expression, as soon as he must concentrate his mind to comprehend the meaning of the poet's utterance, he is withdrawn to some extent from the sensuous pleasure of the lyric. Either he does not understand the point, and is puzzled and confused, or he is stimulated to independent thought, and loses contact with the lyric mood. In short the lyric, strictly so called, should present neither a paradoxical idea nor an abstruse one.

I do not mean to imply thereby that the lyric should be trite or obvious, such as Mr. Guest's solemn asseveration that hours pass one at a time. That sort of poetry is produced by a shallow thinker fumbling with themes which only a profound thinker could handle as genuine poetry. In the latter case it would not

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be treated lyrically. The same theme—time's cruelty and man's impotence—is perfectly valid for lyrical treatment, but Mr. Guest's pedestrian approach is the antitheses of the lyric, which would use a single suggestive and lovely image instead of his generalisations. For contrast take a stanza of Kipling's which, though dangerously weighted with philosophy, still qualifies as a true lyric:

This season's Daffodil,
She never hears
What change, what chance, what chill,
Cut down last year's:

But with bold countenance,
And knowledge small,
Esteems her seven days' continuance
To be perpetual.

After reading these eight brief lines we may have a truer feeling of what the genuine lyric is than all my efforts at definition can give, for it is, as I have said, a matter of feeling rather than intellect—a matter of intuition, if you like, which cannot be defined in the abstract. It is what Arnold called "natural magic" in poetry, so affecting the innate imaginative powers in the hearer that it arouses emotions far beyond the scope of the actual words in

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the poem, and indeed beyond the scope of all verbal expression. The perfect lyric gives the impression of utter spontaneity, of pellucid quintessentialised beauty, without a trace of the author's mind or personality. This is what George Moore means by "pure poetry", of which he has recently made an anthology. It is poetry distilled from the singing heart of the race, appealing directly to the deep unreasoning instincts from which our emotions spring.

There are many elements in it of the old communal folk song, which was really free from the personality of an author for the good reason that it did not have an author, but grew up gradually through the improvisations of countless people to fit tunes which in their turn rose from the natural rhythms of work or dance. Those first beginnings of poetry grew out of a homogeneous unlettered society in which the traditional forms of poetic expression, orally transmitted, were so rigid and familiar that practically everyone could improvise in the traditional style. The result was poetry possessing all that I have been desirating for the pure lyric—melody, simplicity of expression, primitive emotion as theme, freedom from individual traits. Who can say how

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deeply these ancestral memories are still rooted in us at the present day, giving our imaginations a hereditary stimulus to react with otherwise inexplicable vigour when confronted with poetry of this particular type. Whatever the reason, there can be no doubt that the pure lyric has power to stir depths in us beneath the definable regions of rational thought.

I have said that the true lyric is descended from the unsophisticated folk-song, but I do not mean that it must necessarily be still the product of unconscious poetic instinct. On the contrary, with the vanishing of the social conditions which produced folk composition, the power of lyric improvisation rapidly deteriorated, and the unlettered bard of the present day is almost inevitably the embryo philosopher, resembling Edgar Guest rather than the lyrist. Burns is the poet of modern times who has come nearest to the folk lyric, close to the soil as he was and steeped in the marvellous lyric tradition of Scotland, but even Burns was unquestionably the conscious artist as he shaped his stanzas to the old fragments of tunes which he learned from the ale wives and plough boys.

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So there is no antipathy between skilled versecraft and lyric effectiveness. The one requirement is that the craftsmanship should not be apparent. The great age of the English lyric was the Elizabethan and Jacobean era, when the lyric was still wedded to music. The songs in Shakespeare's plays are unsurpassed examples of pure lyricism, with its appearance of entire spontaneity and unconscious natural magic; in this, as in everything else, it is impossible to assert anything dogmatically about the poet, but I think that all the probabilities are in favour of his having been a conscious and elaborate literary artist. Certainly there is no such doubt about his contemporaries who excelled in lyric composition: Thomas Campion wrote a book on the art of poetry; Ben Jonson was a precise and consistent student of classical literary forms; and Robert Herrick, a jeweller by early profession, proclaimed himself of the "Tribe of Ben." But their work has the perfect art which conceals art, giving the illusion of spontaneous outbursts of naive feeling. Since that age, however, music and poetry have drawn farther apart, and the poets have submitted themselves more and more irrevocably to the bur-

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den of the mystery of the world, until the old ravishing melody is heard only in fitful snatches, when some flash of exquisite emotion exalts a poet above the welter of his mind.

Since neither originality nor profundity is to be the criterion for judging a lyric, and since, as I have said, the commonplace and obvious are also banished from it, there may seem to be nothing left for it to contain. But a distinction must be made between the things which are trite or trivial, taken for granted in every day life and therefore ludicrous when presented in the solemn panoply of literary expression, and the things which are the inexhaustible source of poetry—primal senses of beauty and emotion which are always the same yet always new. It is only ideas addressed to the rational mind which become truisms; the irrational intuitions which respond to beauty and music and the lyric are developed and fulfilled by recurrence of the stimulus.

The typical lyric, therefore, says what has been said countless times before, and even the manner of the saying recalls many previous lyrics, since the tradition is such a rigid one. I do not mean that a good lyric is ever recog-

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nisably imitated from another particular lyric, or even modeled upon one; but that the lyric theme is so restricted, and the lyric method so familiar, that any lyric is vaguely and agreeably reminiscent of many others. The effectiveness of a lyric, quite out of proportion to the dimensions and apparent content, is largely attributable to the connotative value of the haunting echoes which recall to the mind indistinctly, because simultaneously, the whole realm of lyric feeling.

The metrical form is usually simple, to match the simplicity of the mood expressed; but the expression must embody itself in the form so inevitably that together they constitute a single unit, in which no remodeling is conceivable. The direct and unsophisticated movement of the piece must be accomplished with compelling music of phrase and line. There can be no detailed description or protracted image—any pictures that there may be are evoked by a swift connotative phrase, suggesting to the reader's mind a whole panorama in which his own imagination provides the details, untrammelled by concrete realities.

One interesting aspect of the case is that in modern times, since the loss of the inherent

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connection between lyric poetry and music, the pure lyric has been practised more successfully by women than by men. In this particular field feminine poets have equalled men who in the wider realms of poetry are immensely superior to them. In the same category with Burns one must admit Alison Cockburn and Isobel Pagan and Susanna Blamire and Jean Glover and Joanna Baillie and Lady Nairne. Shelley and Byron created a few unsurpassed lyrics, but Christina Rossetti produced them with equal success and greater profusion. It seems to be a psychological law that the feminine genius is particularly lyrical. Women tend more to pure intuition and emotion without admixture of reasoning; they have less desire to assert their individuality, and therefore both in the form and content of their poetry conform more readily to the lyric tradition in which the individual is subordinated to the universal and instinctive; they have a natural feeling for melody of rhythm and diction. In Mrs. Browning this sense of melody was strong enough to support her poems through serious technical flaws; and in the great majority of women poets it is the predominant characteristic. The qualities of feel-

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ing and melody far surpass the profundity or originality of the thought expressed. Read anything of Christina Rossetti:

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

And again:

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

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Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

These are the ideal lyric—saying nothing that has not been said numberless times before, nothing that everyone has not always known, but expressing it through sheer beauty and emotion and therefore appealing directly to the heart with unwaning, inexplicable fascination.

Here in Canada, where so many poets are serious-minded, there is a danger that the exponents of the pure lyric should be neglected. Particularly when one is seeking to detect the national spirit or the nativistic quality, one is apt to overlook the purely lyrical parts of Canadian poetry, since the pure lyric is tinted little, if at all, with characteristics of nation or environment. Apart from the difference of language, a French or German lyric is essentially identical with an English or Canadian one. Since the lyric necessarily con-

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forms to a tradition, the Canadian lyric has naturally retained its affiliation with English literature more completely than other forms of Canadian prose and poetry. It is true that there are genuine folk-song types in Canada, such as the ballads of the maritime fishermen and particularly the charming old chansons of French Canada, but the English-speaking poets of the country have shown little familiarity with this material. Instead they have practised, and practised creditably, the "art-lyric" of the old world.

The lyric, being to a special degree the product of human emotions and social relationships, it is naturally overshadowed to some extent in this country where man's contacts with his fellows are less significant than his contacts with nature. On the other hand, the lyric mood comes only when the poet's mind reverts from complex theories and problems to the primitive simplicity of emotion and wonder—a reversion which is more readily attainable here in Canada than in countries of more sophisticated culture. So one may expect to find a considerable element of the lyric in Canadian poetry, although few perfect lyrics, owing to the intrusion of moralising or description.

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Bliss Carman, for example, in almost all his work employs the simple lyric movement with its apparently spontaneous but utterly satisfactory choice of the melodious and revealing phrase; but his poems seldom have the condensation and consequent intensity of the perfect lyric, and moreover, there is nearly always some trace of his particular pantheistic philosophy. Wilson MacDonald comes nearer to the ideal, with his control of lovely words and his emotional power, but few of his poems are free from traces of the poet's distinctive personality. Duncan Campbell Scott, Canada's greatest master of subtle and exquisite poetic form, sometimes rivals the Jacobean who were, like him, consummate masters of their technique:

Creep into my heart, creep in, creep in,
Afar from the fret, the toil and the din,
Where the spring of love forever flows,
As clear as light and as sweet as the rose;
(Creep into my heart),
Where the dreams never wilt but their tints
 refine,
Rooted in beautiful thoughts of thine;
Where morn falls cool on the soul, like sleep,
And the nights are tranquil and tranced and
 deep;

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Where the fairest thing of all the fair
Thou art, who hast somehow crept in there,
Deep into my heart,
Deep into my heart.

And again:

Idle to grieve when the stars are clear above
me,
When the bright waters bubble in the
spring,
Idle to grieve when there are storms to prove
me
And birds that seek me out to come and
sing.

Idle to grieve, the light is on the highway,
There are the mountain meadows to achieve,
Beyond in the pass the airy heights are my
way,
Idle to grieve, glad heart, idle to grieve.

But sometimes the craftsmanship is too perfect; one becomes conscious of its delicate artifice, and in the moment of admiration the lyric spell is shattered:

The new moon a slender thing,
In a snood of virgin light,
She seemed all shy on venturing
Into the vast night.

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Her own land and folk were afar,
She must have gone astray,
But the gods had given a silver star,
To be with her on the way.

Mr. Scott is intimately acquainted with music, but it is the complex music of the modern composers more often than the innocent melodies of the folk; witness his "Variations on a Seventeenth Century Theme", which are amazing translations into poetry of musical effects, but requiring, for their full appreciation, an extensive knowledge of both musical technique and the literary types which he imitates. Which is very far from the unintellectual sphere of the lyric proper.

So for the main body of lyrical work in Canada, as in Britain, one turns to the woman poets. Of course, there are exceptions: Annie C. Dalton, for instance, writes poetry of muscular and independent philosophical speculation. But in general the best work of the woman poets of Canada is in the lyrical vein. It is unmistakable in the first considerable poet among Canadian women, Isabella Valancy Crawford; her chief ability lay in her graceful and easy capture of various important lyric styles. The sea chanty in "Good Bye's the

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Word", the Cavalier song in "Sylvia's Lattices were dark", the traditional ballad in "Mary's Tryst", the pure lyric in "Love's Land":

O Love builds on the azure sea,
And Love builds on the golden sand,
And Love builds on the rose-winged cloud,
And sometimes Love builds on the Land!

O if Love build on sparkling sea,
And if Love build on golden strand,
And if Love build on rosy cloud,
To Love these are the solid land!

O Love will build his lily walls,
And Love his pearly roof will rear
On cloud, or land, or mist, or sea—
Love's solid land is everywhere!

No single model can be identified for any of these poems, but they catch the spirit which animates a whole distinct type of lyric. Each poem is invested not only with its own inherent charm but with that of the whole type which it resembles.

Contemporary poets have the same facility, coupled with a greater sense of the connotative and sound values of individual words. The outstanding figure in this style is, of course,

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Marjorie Pickthall, but there are many others with much of her skill. That these poems fulfil the primary lyric function is proved by the immense popularity of at least two songs by Canadian women, Marjorie Pickthall's "Duna" and Lily A. Lefevre's "Mavis":

Oh, Mavis, awake and remember!

Look out from your lattice and see!

The world is awaiting your bridal,

The earth, and the air, and the sea!

The bright dawn before you is flinging

Her jewels of sunlight and dew,

And the joy in my heart, oh, my darling,

Is singing a welcome to you!

Mavis, Mavis, Mavis!

The birds are calling you, Sweet!

The children are roaming the meadows

For flowers to strew at your feet!

The little grey church in the valley

Is bright with the blossoms of May,

And true is the heart of your lover

Who waits for your coming today!

It does not require the assistance of Craxton's music and McCormack's voice to reveal the beauty of this poem; just to read it is enough to catch its charm, and yet the theme is as old as humanity. Young love, in "Mavis", and wanderlust in "Duna"—they are motives that

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have moved men's hearts to song since time was young, and they come to us today as fresh as the ageless dawn. Marjorie Pickthall's poetry has the simplicity, the music, the luminously suggestive phrases which give the modern lyric its unique place in literature :

Dark is the iris meadow,
Dark is the ivory tower,
And lightly the young moth's shadow
Sleeps on the passion-flower.

Gone are our day's red roses,
So lovely and lost and few,
But the first star uncloses
A silver bud in the blue.

Night, and a flame in the embers
Where the seal of the years was set,—
When the almond-bough remembers
How shall my heart forget?

Isabel Ecclestone Mackay can command the same lyric ecstasy, as in this poem inexplicably omitted from her collection :

Love is never an alien thing ;
Love set the gay world spinning ;
Love sat light on the first bird's wing,
Sang in the Chorus of earth's first spring,
Danced in the first green fairy-ring—
For love had no beginning.

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Love is never an alien thing ;

When the last stars are sending
Their paling beams through an empty sky
And the mad earth reels and the sweet winds
die—

Chaos and darkness!—but you and I,
And love that has no ending.

The number of women who have produced poetry worthy of enumeration in this category is practically coextensive with the roll of women poets. However, I shall mention only Norah Holland, because she possessed a genuine talent for musical lyricism, but also occasionally exemplified the fault into which this talent is in danger of falling—a fault which I have implied in my distinction between echoing a tradition and imitating a definite poem. Norah Holland echoed effectively the types of the Celtic lyrics and others, but at times her facile sense of rhythm unfortunately led her to echo individual poems. One cannot read “The Gentlemen of Oxford” without recalling Wini-fred Letts’ poem on the same subject, or “The Defeated” without recalling Masfield’s “Consecration”; “Sea-song” uses not only the thought and metre but the very phrases of Masfield’s “Sea Fever”, and “Drake’s Drum”

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those of Sir Henry Newbolt. These poems show clearly the dangerous tendency latent in the facility with which our women poets can reproduce a universal mood in a traditional type; they saturate themselves so thoroughly in the tradition that the very phrases of the prototype become incorporated in the sub-conscious mind, and are reproduced as original—it is a recognized psychological process, to which the greatest writers are sometimes subject.

So long as this pitfall can be avoided, poets are fulfilling a necessary function of literature in maintaining the lyric tradition. If, as Arthur Machen contends, the only criterion of literary greatness is in the quality of ecstasy, the lyric is the highest literary form, since it has the maximum of sheer ecstasy untainted by more mundane considerations. Without something of the lyric quality in it, no poetry can succeed; and for this alone the pure lyric should be cultivated as part of any country's literature. But also, aside from its value as the vehicle for poetic tradition and as a leaven for other types of poetry, the pure lyric has always a claim on our regard as the voice of the un-reasoning instinct of song which is one of the

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deepest emotions within us. It is the expression of the unutterable beauty of the world, and the man who is not stirred by it is beyond redemption. It is a moment of selfless exaltation that gives man a share in the ecstasy of the angels.

VII

The Outlook for Canadian Fiction



IT is a quaint paradox that the features most promising for the development of Canadian fiction are not found in novels. This statement is not intended as a reference to the advertising profession. I mean that for a century—that is, ever since literature has been cultivated in Canada—the novels have been, in general, less successful than the books containing the raw material for novels. Historians of English literature consider that the English novel has its origin in Joseph Addison, whose Roger de Coverley set the example of character portrayal from which the distinctive type of English fiction emerged. While fiction in Canada is not thus being evolved as a new literary form, yet those who are serving what might seem an apprenticeship to fiction have attained a better literary mastery than the

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actual novelists. Avoiding the responsibility of a narrative plot, they have achieved a distinctive charm in their observations of nature, living conditions, and human character. Perhaps the cycle is now completing itself. The novel, so long predominant, has become conventionalised until it lacks the vitality to survive being transplanted; so in this new country, itself still raw material for the artistry of civilization, there is a return to the raw material for the artistry of literature.

Major Richardson stands as the only early novelist of importance, and over against the two novels by which he is remembered, must be placed the works of at least three writers. The study of character, as practised by Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the study of conditions, as practised by Susanna Moodie and Anna Jameson, have a perennial appeal. In these books there is a poise, a freshness, a power of humour and sympathy, which has continued to characterise Canadian work of their type. Haliburton lives again in Stephen Leacock and Peter McArthur, Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Jameson in "Janey Canuck" and members of the Women's Press Club.

Various types of novels have been attempted

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by Canadians, and I do not for a moment deny that their success has been considerable. Pleasant, readable books have been frequent enough in Canada, but few have had the rarer qualities which would raise them above the ordinary "circulating library" level attained by hundreds of novels annually in England and the United States. In this chapter I shall not take into account the work of Canadians who have written novels of sentiment, adventure, or mystery, with no effort to depict Canadian life. The muster, extending from May Agnes Fleming to Frank Packard, contains several names that have approached the "best seller" class. It must be extended to include some who have not entirely severed their Canadian affiliation: Sara Jeanette Duncan ("The Imperialist"), Robert Barr ("The Measure of the Rule"), Harvey O'Higgins ("Don-a-Dreams"), and Basil King, with his penchant for Canadian characters. But in general their work, designed to compete on equal terms with that of American and English authors, does not set out to interpret Canada either to her own inhabitants or to outsiders.

Historical romance, so long occupying the pride of place given it by Sir Walter Scott, has

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flourished in this country, and indeed sponsored Canada's first appearance in the wider literary arena. Yet Sir Gilbert Parker's novels, dignified and conscientious though they are, seem to me lacking in the touch of natural magic, supplied by imagination and humour, which converts historical romance from an elaborate marionette-show to breathing life. While admitting that this is merely a personal predilection, I yet venture to assert that historical romance owes less to such certified practitioners as Stanley Weyman, who lacks this quality, than to S. R. Crockett, who has been branded by some learned critics as a charlatan, but who abundantly possesses it. That, however, is a digression. I should merely acknowledge that Sir Gilbert Parker's records of seigneurial days have served well in indicating the picturesqueness of old Quebec life; they adequately fulfill one department of Canadian fiction. But other experiments in the same direction have been less distinguished. Who will remember Charles G. D. Roberts or Wilfred Campbell or T. G. Marquis for their achievements in this line? Gracefully though they handled the historical romance, their reputation rests on other forms of literature.

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Perhaps Canadian history is sufficiently exhilarating without the superaddition of romance. Certainly few readers would want to be bothered with a fictitious and improbable hero and heroine when they can turn to "The Chronicles of Canada" or the books of Agnes Laut and Dr. R. G. Macbeth.

The rest of Canadian fiction can be divided into two general classes, typified by the authors who have won the greatest success in practising them. There is the class of Ralph Connor and the class of L. M. Montgomery. The former comprises the books in which adventures predominate, the latter those which deal chiefly with character. While not all of the adventure stories have the strong ethical tendency of Ralph Connor, most of them imply it in the inhuman perfection of the protagonists and the beneficent outcome of events. From H. A. Cody in the east to Robert Allison Hood in the west, the Connor-ites have peopled the land with handsome youths absorbed in their chivalrous concerns. Nor is there absolute uniformity among the writers whom I am grouping for convenience around L. M. Montgomery. For example, Isabel Ecclestone Mackay experiments with psychol-

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ogical problems that would not concern the more ingenuous personages of Marian Keith, and Nellie McClung reveals a didactic intention particularly her own. But in this category, as in the other, there is a basic similarity in the scope of the books—a whimsical, sympathetic portrayal of naive characters in every-day surroundings.

Both classes, as I have already stated, are praiseworthy within their limitations. They present agreeable people, in situations which hold the reader's interest. It may be argued that a novel cannot be required to do more. By such a standard the existing Canadian fiction cannot be condemned. Indeed, with regard to the special theme of this chapter—the future of Canadian fiction—it has a more positive value. These novelists, in setting an example of simple and wholesome outlook, are in accord with the spirit of the young country, where the sophisticated “complexes” of twentieth-century civilisation are not so all-important. If Canadian fiction is to be censured on the grounds of its “innocuous” quality, the fault is not that this atmosphere prevails, but that there is a failure in its application to the more serious problems of life. If

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Canadian novelists were to create living men and women, towards whom one felt the impulse of recognition and sympathy, and to show them convincingly involved in man's eternal conflict with the forces which oppose him, the unsophisticated outlook would not be a defect, but a particular virtue. Canada is a stage ideally set for such a representation, but until recently it has been used chiefly for the incongruous presentation of drawing-room comedy, while the writers who show an inkling of its greater possibilities have contented themselves with describing the stage-setting.

It is not that the novelists lack the qualities that are to be found in the other writers. Ralph Connor knows his Glengarry and his prairies and mining camps; Nellie McClung can record an incident or a conversation with wit and vigour; Isabel Ecclestone Mackay has delightful humour and grace in her observation of character and manners. But when it comes to the interweaving of this material into a narrative with all the necessary complexities of plot development, emotional interplay, and so forth, one finds that there is little departure from the conventional specifications that make possible the manufacture of innum-

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erable novels in England and the United States. Fashions change somewhat regarding the particular charms of hero and heroine—whether he should be quizzical or serious, she independent or clinging. But the basis is always the same; it is needless to enumerate the fallings in love, the misunderstandings, the escapades, which are familiar to all novel-readers. A certain recognition of this restriction seems perceptible in many Canadian novels: one is not conscious in reading them of that conviction and enthusiasm which glows in the genuine work of art. Anyhow, Canada has not contributed anything very vital to her novelists: Ralph Connor ranks as neither worse nor better than Harold Bell Wright; L. M. Montgomery than Eleanor H. Porter.

In the last several years, however, it has been becoming apparent that the tradition is no longer satisfactory. Almost without exception, the noteworthy new novels show a determined effort towards a more serious treatment of life. In revulsion from egregious heroes and insipid heroines there is a distinct cult of unpleasant characters and an assumption of the harshness that is loosely termed realism. Perhaps we may trace the new impulse to

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"*Maria Chapdelaine*", which so clearly proved the potentiality of Canada as a scene for great fiction. Perhaps we can connect its prevailing tone with Merrill Denison's unsparingly realistic plays. Probably the first token of it came with Marjorie Pickthall's strongly-conceived novel "*The Bridge*." It is admitted that her handling of the plot suffered by comparison with her haunting pictures of natural phenomena; but for several reasons—as an effort to depict deep and terrible spiritual experience, as a representation of the supreme importance which nature assumes in this country—"The Bridge" is a landmark in Canadian fiction.

Since then the tide has set in more strongly. Among the new writers Beaumont Cornell has invaded the small-town life of the East, and Laura Goodman Salverson, approaching a department of Canadian life formerly monopolised by Ralph Connor's "*The Foreigner*", gives us "*The Viking Heart*"; while Miss J. G. Syme, in "*Our Little Life*"—a realistic transcript of drab urban life in Montreal,—and Pierre Coalfleet, in "*Solo*",—the record of a genius developed in a rural locale of the Maritimes,—bring to Canadian themes a deliberate artistry uncommon in the new world. Other

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writers have broken away from the old traditions to which they formerly adhered: Mazo de la Roche, who had seemed a promising recruit of the Montgomery camp, deserted to write "Possession"; Robert Stead and Douglas Durkin are finding their way out of the Connor-ite ranks. Miss de la Roche's novel tries to present actual truth of farm life on the shores of Lake Ontario, with a vacillating hero whose character and actions are anything but heroic; the ending successfully reproduces the unsatisfactory inconclusiveness of real life, but in general the novel is open to the same comment as "The Bridge"—the local colour is more memorable than the somewhat stilted and unconvincing characterisation. Mr. Durkin's novel, "The Magpie", is likewise afflicted with arid patches of undistinguished diction and devitalised characters, but as a picture of contemporary conditions and problems, as reflected in the personality of a rather inarticulate idealist, it is a real achievement, recalling the work of H. G. Wells. Industrial organisation of the Pacific Coast, with its mingling of adventure and hard-headed business, appears effectively in Bertrand Sinclair's "The Inverted Pyramid." Experience gained in stories of

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other territories is applied by "Onoto Watanna" to a Canadian theme in "Cattle", a story of brutal force and directness in its handling of western ranch life. Arthur Stringer too returns from the non-Canadian class with his "Prairie" trilogy.

These novels all to a greater or less degree suffer from a quality of heaviness. One feels in reading them that the authors are conscientiously trying to compose books fulfilling certain specifications: the workmanship is creditable, but there is none of the creative enthusiasm which transmutes handicraft into great art. The writers are not afire with prophetic fervour on behalf of their topic—they are not even on intimate terms with their characters. So long as this situation prevails, the fictitious personages will never change from ponderously manipulated marionnettes into breathing, talking beings. Their actions are too consistent to be credible, their language is too literary to be real. Such stories fail to fulfil the very primary function of a novel, which is the introduction of the reader to people whom he considers worthy of his friendship. There is more of this charm of naturalness in the novels of the L. M. Montgomery school, sentiment-

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talised though their histories may be, than in the unreal people who stalk amid uncompromisingly realistic environments in the purposeful novels of the newest generation.

Several outstanding novels of the 1925 season showed a marked advance towards that genuine realism that results from a thorough mastery of the subject. Fred Jacob's "Day Before Yesterday" is almost alone in Canadian fiction as a representative of the English novel "par excellence", the tradition of Jane Austen and Thackeray and Galsworthy. Mr. Jacob describes life in an Ontario town a generation ago with the kindly satire, the personal comment, and the equipment of specific detail, which make the reader glow with the lasting satisfaction of imaginative participation in the scene.

The other noteworthy novels, significantly enough, all deal with the experiences of immigrants. First of all Augustus Bridle presented "Hansen", a chaotic crowded novel in the school of Rabelais and Dickens, giving an astonishingly wide panorama of Canadian life in many provinces and many callings, exemplified by the career of a Norwegian boy. Then who but Nellie McClung built a novel,

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"Painted Fires", about a Finnish girl, making a serious effort to study the psychology of her race and its modification by unpleasant experiences in such Canadian institutions as dope-dens, prison, rescue-home, mining-camp, and police-court. But the two pre-eminent novels were both the work of Scandinavian-Canadians, describing the grim struggle for existence of the prairie settler. Martha Ostenso reveals few traces of her age or sex in "Wild Geese", a sombre and powerful study of the narrow lives and ingrowing passions of a family in bondage to the tyranny of the soil. However, had it not been for the extrinsic distinction of a prize award, Miss Ostenso's book would have had a dangerous rival in "Settlers of the Marsh" by Frederick Philip Grove. In the manner of Hardy and Hamsun, the author studies the spiritual disintegration of his hero, against a background of the daily routine of homestead life and the lovely and terrible forces of nature. The description of the storm is akin to that in "Far from the Madding Crowd." As a narrative of profound spiritual crisis influenced by a typical Canadian setting, this novel achieves what "The Bridge" attempted, and might claim to be the great novel

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of the country were it not that the theme, though honestly and sanely presented, proves repellent to many readers.

So the ideal novel has not yet been achieved by Canadians. The most beautiful prose written in Canada is still reserved by L. Adams Beck for stories on Oriental themes, collected as "The Ninth Vibration", "The Key of Dreams", "The Perfume of the Rainbow", and other fascinating titles which suggest the haunting mysticism and exotic richness of the tales. And the most distinguished novels written in Canada are those of Frederick Niven which describe the Scotland of his youth. The novel, civilisation's most complex literary expression, is not yet fully acclimatised in Canada. But the time seems nearer when a "rapprochement" of the raw material, which has been ably surveyed by various writers, and the novelistic ability which is gradually being mastered, may bring forth a type of fiction noteworthy alike as Canadian and as literature.

VIII

What about the Canadian Drama?



IF statistics of actual publication are to be the only criterion, Canadian drama may justly be dismissed as a negligible factor in the literature of the country. Apart from the conventional poetic tragedies of Wilfred Campbell and Charles Mair, which under existing conditions belong to the category of poetry rather than to the practicable drama, the only published volumes of plays are Merrill Denison's "The Unheroic North", and Fred Jacob's "One Third of a Bill." And two solitary specimens, no matter how important in themselves, must as a rule be considered isolated phenomena rather than of a distinct species.

But on a wider basis of estimating dramatic possibilities in Canada, many indications must be admitted as evidence, although they have

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not reached the consummation of being crystallised between book covers. There is a considerable number of plays as yet unprinted which have proved themselves successful on the stage. There is probably a larger number awaiting a "première", or still in the process of composition, or merely incubating in the minds of authors. And even more important, there is rapidly being perfected a well-organised machinery for the production of plays in which individuality of treatment and significance of literary style preponderate—namely little theatre movement. The most frequent function of the little theatre is to present good plays by prominent authors, particularly those of foreign countries, but it can very readily develop into an experimental laboratory in which original and far-reaching dramatic innovations can be evolved. At least, it provides an opportunity for writers to gain first-hand experience of stage conditions and possibilities. And at best, it provides an audience prepared to tolerate innovations and to criticise intelligently the merits of work confessedly experimental.

The essential part which such organisations must play in the development of dramatic lit-

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erature is obvious. For the writing of poetry or fiction, the necessary study of technique is to be obtained through the medium of books, and the audience for the finished product is reached by the same channel. But for the writing of plays both functions must be fulfilled by the complex and living organism of the theatre. Only by direct observation and experience in the theatre can the author comprehend the methods which he is to employ, and only by the acted interpretation of his work can he estimate its strongest appeal to the public.

The practical demonstration of this fact is already to be perceived in the United States, where the few years of the little theatre movement have been marked by the first appearance of dramatic writing distinguished enough in literary quality, and distinctive enough in method and material, to claim a prominent place in the nation's literature. The fact that the object of little theatres is not primarily commercial, and that therefore the audience can be restricted to enthusiasts, enabled many writers to experiment with dramatic types which are now beginning to catch the fancy of the wider public and which may quite conceiv-

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ably lead to far-reaching changes in the popular attitude towards art, since the theatre is so intimately connected with pictorial, musical, and elocutionary effects. So long as the moving pictures continue to provide the chosen amusement for the vast majority of people who seek only ephemeral entertainment, with the attendant consequence of a decline in the legitimate theatre as a commercial venture, the faithful adherents of the spoken drama come to rely more and more on the various art-theatres, community playhouses, and the like.

This state of affairs prevails in Canada as well as in the United States, with the additional factor, apart from the competition of moving-pictures, that the great distances and expenses of transportation preclude the penetration of many good travelling companies into the remoter parts of the country—a phrase which covers all but a few of the largest centres of population. So Canadians would be wholly deprived of the enjoyment of good drama were it not that even the remotest localities can be counted upon to produce a certain number of people enthusiastic enough to undertake all the difficulties of producing plays on their own

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initiative. Thanks to the diversity of experience and cultural background which characterises the Canadian population, there nearly always proves to be someone in such a group who has been associated in some capacity or other with the stage and its concerns. With this nucleus the organisation develops into a cast which rapidly improves in ability and which finds sufficient recompense in the pleasure of artistic creation. For the theatre is a form of art doubly suited to such conditions as those of present-day Canada—it offers inexpensive pleasure and relaxation to audiences lacking the leisure to cultivate tastes for paintings or poems or music, and it can be adequately practised by performers who have not undergone the long special training that those other artistic professions require.

Of course, amateur theatricals are no recent innovation in Canada: their history can be traced back for more than a century in the recreations of garrison officers and other social groups. But it is only in the last few years that a large number of suitable plays have been available for such performers, since a one-act play can be given intensive preparation by busy people whose handling of a full-length

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play would necessarily be cursory and inartistic. And the recognised existence of little theatres in so many places has produced a wide-spread semi-official organisation of conferences, periodicals, and special advisers which has rendered accessible to the amateur producer an extensive knowledge of technical subtleties and practical devices.

Certain evidences of these activities in Canada are already to be found in literary form. Out of the most prominent pioneer group, which has now gained its established and highly adequate headquarters in Hart House Theatre of the University of Toronto, came Roy Mitchell's "Shakespeare for Community Players." The scope of this useful manual is very much wider than the title indicates, for the book contains all the practical information required for the organisation of a dramatic unit and the amateur production of any play, not exclusively Shakespeare's. Another Toronto group in which much dramatic experience has been gained, the Dickens Fellowship Players, is represented by the volume of "Scenes from Dickens" edited by J. Edmund Jones. The practical value of such books in preparing the way for more ambitious experi-

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ments gives them significance in any survey of the dramatic outlook in Canada.

Such evidence of interest and activity seems sufficient to justify the prediction that the literary output of Canada will soon begin to include plays which will be a part of the country's distinctive self-expression. The few plays already available do much to support the prophecy. Merrill Denison's work contains some of the finest realistic presentation of Canadian material that has yet been made in any form. The title of the collection implies a definite intention to counteract the prevalent romantic misrepresentation of Canadian scenes. In this reaction from sentimental and artificial narratives, he has concentrated his attention upon one of the most barren of Canadian localities, which is naturally inhabited chiefly by people lacking the initiative to seek more prosperous opportunities. Accordingly his full-length drama "Marsh Hay" is a depressing picture of baffled and impoverished existence, and the three one-act comedies handle similar themes in a more satiric but little less disillusioned vein.

In Fred Jacob's plays there is designed diversity. Being primarily a critic, it follows

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that, warned by the failures of others adventuring on original and uncharted courses, he has chosen to emulate those who have attained greatness by pursuing the conservative. Like Merrill Denison, he avoids bespangling his characters; he draws them, however, two or three strata higher in society, concerning himself mainly with small-town folk who are "moderately well to do."

Another type of one-act play appears in Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's "Matches" and "The Second Lie." The former of these is a comedy, the latter a tragedy, but both show a firm grasp of dramatic principles; in structure and suspense they are stronger than Merrill Denison's plays, since his are in the modern realistic method that seeks truth to life by reproducing the flatness and inconclusiveness of actual events. Mrs. Mackay's plays contain the very pleasant character observation of her novels, and the severe formal restrictions to which she successfully adheres give her plays compression and force, thereby making them more outstanding achievements than her novels have been.

A wholly different category is represented by "The Woodcarver's Wife", Marjorie Pick-

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thall's poetic one-act tragedy. Its beauty and simplicity give it a grave conventional effect, like that of a pre-Raphaelite painting, but it has enough dramatic force to be successful in the genuine tragic tradition.

Recent competitions conducted by Little Theatre groups have produced a large number of creditable plays, some by writers already known in other literary fields, many under unfamiliar names. "Low Life", by Mazo de la Roche is deserving of special mention. In the delineation of character it is easily one of the best one-act plays to be published separately. From the published particulars it would seem that all of the three types already exemplified are represented by these latest contributions, which will probably soon be available in published form. Meanwhile the various manifestations of dramatic activity throughout Canada are encouraging testimonies to the development of a suitable environment in which the infant drama may grow and learn under ideal conditions. It has every opportunity to overtake in importance the senior branches of Canadian literature.

IX

The Quality of Canadian Humour



JUST as among individuals there is no insult more bitterly resented than the accusation of being deficient in a sense of humour, so among nations there are more misunderstandings arising from lack of appreciation of one another's jokes than from the most grave diplomatic crises. Much of the national prejudice which paves the way for touchy feelings and eventual conflict can be traced to the fact that one country has no perception of the other's witticisms. To the Englishman the humour of Germany seems crude and blundering, that of France irreverent and immoral, that of the United States an affair of perpetual violent exaggeration. To the inhabitants of those countries the Englishman appears obtuse and literal-minded. These national characteristics have been themselves

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the material of innumerable jokes, but at the basis of the situation there is a genuine "superiority complex" that is seriously dangerous. The man who can see the point of view of all the various nations, as embodied in their humorous periodicals, is in the true way towards being a cosmopolitan; and anyone who could interpret the spirit of one country's jokes to the people of another would be a peacemaker of the first order.

In view of these facts, a particular interest attaches to the quality of Canadian humour. The frequent assertion that Canada has no literature apart from that of England or the United States might be tested by an analysis of Canadian humour to see whether it is British, American, a hybrid of the two, or something distinct from both.

At first thought, one is tempted to make the generalisation that Canadian literature is impoverished on the humorous side. In the first place, northern races are as a rule less addicted to comedy than the more volatile peoples of the south; and secondly, Canadians are face to face with the stern realities of life in their grimmest manifestation. Men who are wresting an existence from a wilderness,

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with the prospect of extermination if they relax their efforts or fail in the contest, are in no mood to pause for a glance at the comical side of life. But even success in their efforts does not promote humour, for a man recently grown prosperous is too well satisfied with the material parts of existence to relish the whimsical and mischievous and destructive elements which humour includes. True humour requires a spiritual quality and a detached, critical outlook, and these come rather from a touch of suffering and an attitude of resignation to the blows of fate, than from either material prosperity or determined progressive effort. It is among the Celtic races, with their whimsical acceptance of misfortune or poverty, and the Latin races, with their ability to cultivate leisure with no concern for worldly advancement, that the humorous outlook most prevails.

So there need be no surprise that some of the most famous Canadian writers are not distinguished for the humorous element in their work. It is for this reason that there is a certain sense of heaviness, of conscientious effort, in the work of Gilbert Parker, Ralph Connor, and many other novelists, particularly

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those of the male sex. For some reason the women writers of fiction have, almost without exception, the talent of whimsical observation and representation which gives their work a charm unattained by the men.

And yet, the fact must not be forgotten that Canada has produced two humorists of international reputation, as well as a number of others of real distinction. It is especially relevant to this investigation to observe that both the leading humorists have been popular alike in England and the United States. The earlier of the two, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, is credited with being the originator of the typical "American school" of humour, yet his work was chiefly published and circulated in England, where he became a figure of national significance; the more recent writer, Stephen Leacock, has equally wide and receptive audiences for his books and lectures in England and in the United States. Probably no American humorist has achieved such success as Haliburton and Leacock in England; certainly no English humorist has rivalled them in the United States.

Recent critics have inclined to dispute the

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theory that Haliburton is the father of the American type of comic literature. But after all, it is of little importance whether or not he influenced later writers to the extent of conscious imitation. The indisputable fact is that he was the first writer to use the material and devices which they have since continued to exploit. The employment of the dialect for humorous effect, the pithy apothegms illustrated with quaint references drawn from rustic life, the mingling of sound "horse-sense" and droll absurdity, these and other traits which are familiar in the work of a whole crowd of professional humorists of the nineteenth century were first presented to the reading public in the figure of the 'cute Sam Slick of Slickville.

Change of fashion and manners and institutions is more thoroughly reflected in humorous literature than anywhere else, so at first sight there seems to be little in common between the work of Haliburton and that of Stephen Leacock. Yet there is some degree of basic similarity, in that both use much apparently irresponsible absurdity to convey really penetrating criticism of human nature in general and current foibles in particular.

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Prevailing literary fashion dictated that Haliburton should use the device of the stock character throughout his work and that Leacock, in this age of abbreviation, should produce short "skits" and parodies. But both authors treated the humours of human nature in such a way as to transcend merely local interest and to entertain readers of other nationalities.

Only in one book, "Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town", does Leacock use recognisably Canadian material and challenge comparison with the novelists by describing the actual life of a community, and to many people this is his book of most perennial attraction. His other books deal with the urban standardised life of the present day, which differs little on the two sides of the border, since easy travel, syndicated periodicals, and uniformity all over the continent in commodities, amusements, and ideas have produced an organised culture that is rapidly imposing itself on other parts of the world.

During the period between Haliburton and Leacock the country possessed few outstanding humorists. There was Lanigan, whose fertile wit, inspired by a brief news item in a

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paper, evolved the mirthful dirge upon "The Ahkoond of Swat." There was J. W. Bengough, who successfully conducted a humorous periodical for some years, and fulfilled one function of the modern humorist by using his talent in political controversies. There was "Bob" Edwards, who also edited a periodical and whose jests often rise to the quality of genius, but are not infrequently indelicate, which is, in Canada, a serious obstacle to fame.

Since Leacock established his type of humorous sketch there are evidences of a "Leacock school" developing in the country. The chief figures in this school, so far, have been Peter Donovan, P. W. Luce, and B. K. Sandwell. Like Leacock, they discover irresistibly ludicrous possibilities in the most familiar and trivial episodes of every-day life. There is probably no "professional" humorist who has consistently maintained the spontaneity and originality of his output under the tyranny of periodical publication and the need of satisfying the public's avid appetite for laughter. So there are occasions when the burlesque of the Canadian humorists, Leacock included, becomes forced and mechani-

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cal. But at its best it is a natural joviality that is genuine literature because it expresses a genuine personal outlook on life.

But the consideration of humour in Canadian literature cannot justly be restricted to those who are primarily and avowedly "humorists." There is much admirable fun and comedy occurring incidentally in the poetry and novels. As I have suggested, it is chiefly the women novelists who excel in this regard, and conversely, it is the masculine poets who can lay aside the singing robe and display delightful wit. This bears out my implication that real humour needs above all imagination and a touch of unwordliness. The Canadian poets are less business-like and sober-minded folk than the Canadian novelists, so their faculty of humour is more fully developed. Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and Wilson MacDonald can all produce epigrams and occasional verse abounding in whimsical fantasy. The latter sometimes combines his humour with his deeper poetic feeling, the result being such appealing pieces as "Maggie Swartz." Consistently humorous in his outlook on life is Tom MacInnes, whose assumption of a flippant and

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irresponsible attitude adds to the effectiveness of his ironic and pathetic verses. The air of sophistication is rare in Canadian literature, and in MacInnes' poems it is pleasantly allied with boyish ingenuousness.

E. J. Pratt's "The Witches' Brew", recently published, is unique in Canadian literature. It is the only successful attempt in poetic grotesquerie. Reason deserts rhyme; imagery is synonymous with diablerie; and the result is a scholarly bit of fooling. It is the more unusual from the pen of one who has written "The Decision."

Indeed, a survey of the sense of humour in Canadian poets would be practically a roll-call of the fraternity. There would be W. H. Drummond, whose transcripts of "habitant" life never fail to awaken sympathetic smiles or uproarious laughter. And there would be Marjorie Pickthall, who diversified her grave-eyed poetry with "Wiltshire", which reveals, in addition to exquisite poetic simplicity, the whimsical quality which her friends knew so well.

The characteristic possessed in common by these otherwise dissimilar poets is humanity. They never reveal the caustic or mordant wit

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that arises from bitterness towards fate or disgust with human nature. Their humour is one face of the coin of compassion, the other face of which is passionate sympathy. This humour which so closely neighbours pathos is open to the charge of sentimentality; but the application of that term is always a subjective matter, and, after all, there is for the vast majority of readers a more lasting charm in the literature which regards human fallibility with an indulgent eye than in that which satirises with uncompromising superiority. To me, at any rate, it seems that Canadian writers are usually successful in avoiding the unpalatably sentimental; for sentimentality implies a meretricious overstrained emotionalism which is foreign to the utter simplicity and sincerity of the Canadian attitude. Perhaps it is that in a pioneering country men cannot afford to be aloof and critical—only by making allowances for one another's shortcomings can they maintain their offensive against nature's entrenchments. Controlled by that importunate compulsion, they perceive the fundamental unity of the human race in its battle for existence, a perception obscured by more firmly established societies,

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where superficial differences in rank and manners assume greater prominence, providing material for satiric comedy.

The humour of the novelists has the same characteristic as that of the poets, but it comes more dangerously near to the border of sentimentality. Dealing with imaginary persons and episodes, the treatment is apt to become artificial. Seldom is there the intensity of creative imagination which brings absolute conviction. Admittedly there are passages of splendid farce in the stories of L. M. Montgomery, Nellie McClung, and others, but these give a very strong impression of being events from real life introduced arbitrarily into the narrative. Such episodes belong rather with those in books which confess to being transcripts of actual experience, such as the writings of Peter McArthur, and "A Motor Scamper 'Cross Canada" by Percy Gomery. The hair-dyeing episode in "Ann of Green Gables" and Aunt Kate's false teeth in "The Second Chance" survive in the memory as gleeful interludes along with "The Great Dramar of the Gall-Stones" in Mr. Gomery's *Odyssey*. Incidents like those, told with all the freshness of keen first-hand observation,

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are revelations of the inexhaustible fun in the ordinary life of every-day people, and as such take rank along with the sketches of Leacock and his school.

To generalise on the basis of the foregoing analysis, it seems that Canadian humour as a type differs from American and English alike. There is not the characteristic exaggeration of the one nor the characteristic restraint of the other. There is a closer affinity, perhaps, with the Scottish type, as exemplified by Barrie, with its whimsicality and sympathetic indulgence, but the Canadian style is more downright, and deals more with action, less with character. It is a hearty sense of fun, arising from genuine joy of life, including an eye for the absurd which is latent in the commonplace. It is essentially good-natured. Steering a perilous course between crudity and sentimentality, it usually contrives to avoid both, by sheer force of simple, sunny cheerfulness. One has the feeling that it is not yet fully co-ordinated with the bulk of Canadian literature, and that when the qualities of subtlety and insight are more highly developed, and the whole then absorbed into the Canadian author's mentality until it

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is a part of his subconscious equipment, Canadian fiction may attain the intangible endowment of distinction which at present it mysteriously lacks.

Nature in Canadian Prose



REFERENCE has already been made to the obvious fact that the predominant factor in Canadian art, both pictorial and literary, is nature and natural phenomena, in contradistinction to the human and social interests which hold the premier place in countries of older civilisation. It is in landscape painting that the Canadian artists have established their claim to represent a new movement in the world's art; it is in nature poetry that the leading Canadian poets have produced their best-loved work. Archibald Lampman was preeminently a landscape poet, depicting his native Ontario scenery in mid-summer heat and winter blizzard and autumnal splendour. Alongside these rural scenes of Lampman stand the Lake Lyrics of William Wilfred Campbell, which actually make visible to the reader the lonely region of the Great Lakes in the varying moods of nature.

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Two of the most familiar Canadian poems are Roberts' "Tantramar Revisited" and Carman's "Low Tide on Grand Pré", both landscape pieces. Almost all of the other Canadian poets have been equally attentive to the presentation of natural objects.

Unrelieved description soon palls, however, no matter how grand or beautiful may be the scenery described; and the mere fact that the locality presented is characteristically Canadian is not sufficient to give its description genuine originality as literature. So it is less for its subject-matter than for its outlook upon that subject-matter that Canadian nature poetry has a quality definitely its own. What this outlook is, how the Canadian poets interpret their natural surroundings, I have already tried to determine in the chapter on "Canadian Poets and the New Universe" and elsewhere. So for the moment I shall confine my attention to Canadian prose, in order to decide the extent to which the natural characteristics of the country have affected that portion of the literary output.

In prose fiction the influence of scenery and seasons has been surprisingly little studied. When one considers the extent to which natu-

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ral forces dictate the conditions of human life in Canada, it is strange that writers have not grasped the opportunity of studying the psychological effects of such circumstances. Canadian novelists seem unable to achieve an artistic commingling of the natural background with the human drama. Most of them have concentrated upon the human drama and unduly neglected the role played by nature. The two books which I have already mentioned as genuinely representing the importance of natural forces—"The Bridge" and "Maria Chapdelaine"—have gone too far to the other extreme, so that one is inclined to remember them as series of descriptive sketches, to the almost entire exclusion of the human protagonists.

It is an even stranger fact that Canadian literature is so poor in nature essays. The country has produced no writer in the succession of Gilbert White and Thoreau and W. H. Hudson. It is true that there have been interesting studies of the country's plant-life, from the work of Catherine Parr Traill to that of Julia Henshaw, but the primary significance has been scientific rather than literary. Closer to the great tradition have been Jack Miner's

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recent book on his work among the birds, Frederick Philip Grove's impressions of prairie scenes, and W. H. Blake's "Brown Waters" and "In a Fishing Country." Finally there are the books of Peter McArthur, which find humour, philosophy and beauty in the every-day round of farm life—the rotation of the seasons with their allotted duties and the quaint ways of domestic animals. The very titles—"In Pastures Green" and "The Red Cow and her Friends"—suggest the particular homely charm of the records.

There remains one field of nature-writing, however, in which Canadian writers have more than atoned for their neglect of other opportunities. Indeed, it is a wholly new "genre" which Canadian authors have contributed to the world's literature. I refer to the type of animal story which finds its most famous exponents in Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton, and which has also been practised by W. A. Fraser, Arthur Heming, and Archie McKishnie. About the work of these authors there is a quality of sincerity, a lack of sentimentality, and an impression of dependable first-hand knowledge of the subject, which justify their being con-

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sidered the members of a single group or school.

Of course, the animal "motif" is not new in fiction. On the contrary it is probably the oldest of all, since much of the most primitive folklore embodied itself in legends about beasts. As more metaphysical religions evolved themselves, the ancient tales degenerated into popular fables and fairy tales, which retained their vitality from generation to generation with that conservatism which pertains to the folk-mind. Thus a strong tradition was established, which cropped up in the world's literature in many forms and through many centuries. For example, there are the fables of Aesop; the "Physiologus" which early Christian preachers used to enforce ethical precepts; the mediaeval "beast-epic" of which well-known portions are Reynard the Fox and Chanticleer; the Perrault fairy-tales of Puss-in-Boots, Beauty and the Beast, etc.; and all the popular legends of werewolves and other magical creatures. A tradition so firmly rooted in the race's subconscious mind is not easy to displace, and one finds it still being utilised with as much success as ever in our own generation, in

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Rudyard Kipling's fascinating "Jungle Books."

The quality common to the whole tradition is that the animals are endowed with human characteristics. No effort is made at realistic representation of their psychology or habits. The whole thing is frankly an apologue, presenting human traits under the transparent disguise of animal names, for satiric or didactic purposes.

It was from this hoary yet still potent tradition that Canadian writers definitely broke away, and there can be no doubt that their country and its conditions were the chief factor in inspiring the innovation. Probably modern science was partly responsible, and also the humanitarian spirit which became so strong during the Victorian era. As revealing the latter tendency, one must take into account the popularity of "Black Beauty" and other books of its type, in which the lives of animals were treated realistically, although the fortunes of human beings were interwoven in order to keep up the interest of the story. It is noteworthy that the best successors to "Black Beauty" are the work of a Canadian writer, Marshall Saunders, whose "Beautiful Joe", "Golden Dicky", and other

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stories of animals have enjoyed a wide circulation not confined to Canada. But such books are always in danger of crossing the border into sentimentality, and once that border is crossed the realm of true literature is left behind.

The work of the group I have mentioned is not devoid of the humanitarian interest, for it is interpenetrated with sympathy for the dumb' creation and insight into their emotions, but the authors have too much of the scientific spirit to commit the "pathetic fallacy" of mingling human feelings with their animal psychology. The scientific equipment of Ernest Thompson Seton, in particular, is highly adequate: he is a professional naturalist, and his "Life Histories of Northern Animals" is a standard authority on the subject. All of the writers in the group have lived in the woods and obtained at first hand their information upon the ways of the wild creatures.

The new type of animal story was evolved when the two currents of interest, humanitarian desire to understand the animals' point of view and scientific interest in their psychology, were fused by a new contact with the

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forces which had originally propagated the beast-story tradition. Primitive man had made the animals the heroes of his fiction because he feared and respected them. Living in close contact with them, he knew their ways and realised that they were no mean antagonists. As civilisation progressed and men came to know only domestic creatures or caged and harmless wild animals, the beast tradition lost its strongest significance and became a mere convention. It was because men felt themselves immeasurably superior to the beasts that there was so much satiric force in fables which represented human institutions in the animal kingdom. A man who lived by matching his wits and strength against those of lions and wolves would find little meaning in the fables of Aesop or La Fontaine.

In the new world, where men were brought once more face to face with animals in their free condition, the sense of equality and kinship was established anew. By admiring and respecting animals, men soon came to feel a bond of brotherhood, especially when all were alike seeking to subsist in defiance of the same natural rigours. The theory of evolu-

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tion gave scientific justification to the idea, and thus the way was prepared for animals to have a literary value of their own, quite apart from their intercourse with human beings. Modern science joined hands with ancient instincts; and the outcome was a new literary genus which the old world could never have produced. A passage from Thompson Seton sets the keynote: "We and the beasts are kin. Man has nothing that the animals have not at least a vestige of; the animals have nothing that man does not in some degree share. Since, then, the animals are creatures with wants and feelings differing in degree only from our own, they surely have their rights. This fact, now beginning to be recognized by the Caucasian world, was first proclaimed by Moses and was emphasized by the Buddhist over two thousand years ago."

Almost simultaneously, about the end of the nineteenth century, the new type of story was produced by Roberts, Thompson Seton and Fraser. In "Earth's Enigmas" Roberts established the type of short story devoted entirely to episodes of animal life, which he has since continued to publish in "Kindred of the Wild", "Kings in Exile" and other col-

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lections. W. A. Fraser's best-known stories of the same class appear in "Mooswa and others of the Boundaries." Ernest Thompson Seton does not adhere so closely to the short-story form, using a more informal reminiscent method, as in "Wild Animals I have known", "Lives of the Hunted", and many others. Additional interest is provided by the numerous illustrations which Seton uses to enforce the points of his descriptions. Arthur Heming also illustrates his own work, and indeed is primarily an artist, whose early contact with literature was through such work as the illustrations for Fraser's "Mooswa." His painting expeditions into the northern wildernesses gave him the material which he uses in "The Drama of the Forest", "Spirit Lake", and other records which show the artist's eye in the vivid representation of animal life and the silence and mystery of the woods. Somewhat more recent in his literary development is Archie McKishnie, whose books also deal with animals and open-air lore, particularly "Openway" and "Mates of the Tangle", which are in the Roberts manner.

So to one element at least in the life of the

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country adequate justice has been done by the nation's authors. They have taken advantage of the unsurpassed opportunity to become intimate with the aboriginal occupants of the land—the shy creatures of the forest—and have done noble service in awakening sympathy and understanding for that neglected and oppressed race. In three fields of endeavour, the humanitarian, the scientific, and the literary, they have been the pioneers of a new development which can evoke only admiration.

Interpreters of the Indian



IN 1889 the famous English critic, Theodore Watts-Dunton, reviewed W. D. Lighthall's anthology "Songs of the Great Dominion." By this review he won the gratitude of Pauline Johnson, as he explains in his introduction to her "Flint and Feather." The point which he stressed in his article was the distinctive new note contributed to literature by the Indian theme in the work of the young poet of Brantford. His argument was that Canada, lacking the old world's spirit of antiquity, cannot compete in the department of poetry which deals with the life of man, but that in the other department dealing with the life of nature, Canada is in a favoured position, with opportunities far beyond those which were available to Wordsworth. And he suggested that through the medium of the

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Indian this treatment of nature could be accomplished with particular effectiveness.

He was unquestionably right in his two general propositions, but he went somewhat astray, I think, in associating them. It is true that Canadian authors are especially well situated for the understanding and representation of nature. It is true also that the Indian theme, although not the only peculiarly Canadian one with great literary possibilities, is certainly among the most important. But it is concerned less with the life of nature than with the life of man; while Lampman and Carman and others were producing the distinctive Canadian nature poetry, Pauline Johnson was making her appeal through the human interest of her poems. During the twenty years which followed the writing of Watts-Dunton's article she established firmly her position as the interpreter of the red man, but her poetry is seldom distinguished by the depth and originality of its treatment of nature. Her work is a sufficient proof that the literary significance of the Indian is on the side of "the life of man" and not of "the life of nature."

By recital tours through England and the

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United States, as well as Canada, intensifying the effectiveness of her poetry by means of her compelling personality, Pauline Johnson became the acclaimed literary representative of her race; but she is not alone in the field. A number of Canadian writers have recognised the unique artistic and dramatic effects to be derived from Indian life. Fortunately, none of them has written a "Hiawatha." That is to say, the Canadian Indian has not been conventionalised and idealised into an epic hero mildly allegorised—a literary fate from which it would have been almost impossible for any subsequent chronicler to redeem him, since a false and facile impression, once implanted in the popular mind, is harder to eradicate than the profoundest truth. The Canadian Indian has various qualifications for appearing in literature, without being elaborated into a copper-coloured Aeneas or Prometheus, or a solar deity. For one thing, the Indian mythology, product of naïve minds in close contact with primitive nature at her wildest and grandest, has literary value, sometimes quaint and sometimes impressive. Again, the Indian character, ranging from its merely physiological aspects — endurance,

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keenness of sensory perceptions, and so on—up to its more complex mingling of dignity, courage, and fierce savagery, is full of dramatic elements, displayed to the fullest effect against the background of eventful life on prairie, mountain, and river. Finally there is the tragedy which inevitably followed his contact with the white invader, and of which the last pathetic acts are still dragging on before our eyes.

It did seem likely for a moment that Hiawatha might intrude, when James D. Edgar (later Sir James) published "The White Stone Canoe, a legend of the Ottawas"; he rather injudiciously adopted the metre which has become indissolubly associated with Longfellow's poem, so that the Canadian origins of the narrative are swamped by the reader's reminiscences of the previous poem. But Edgar was not the first who tried to fit the Canadian Indian into existing literary conventions: several earlier Canadian poets, disciples of Byron and Scott, undertook to create Indian Manfreds and Marmions. They could perceive, as abstract ideas, the distinctive features of Indian life, but they presented them without any corroborative details show-

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ing familiarity with facts. Along with much vague didactic moralising on their themes, they described scenes and events which, one suspects, were inspired by the reading of "Lalla Rookh" and "The Giaour" rather than by seeing the inside of a wigwam. Thus almost all of the several themes which I indicate in this study were handled by early poets, but with so little realism that their novelty does not appear. At Montreal in 1830 Adam Kidd published his book "The Huron Chief and other poems": in the preface he deprecates his temerity in versifying, since poetry has been rendered perfect by "the master hands of Byron and Moore." Twenty years later appeared Peter John Allan's "Poetical Remains" with a long "Lament of the Indian" for his lost glory. And Conway Cartwright wrote in 1860 "Lena, a legend of Niagara", in a rather pleasant irregular metre. The most assiduous poet, however, was Mrs. Leprohon, whose works include a cantata called "The White Canoe, a legend of Niagara Falls"; "The Huron Chief's Daughter" who maintains her race's pride under torture; "The Tryst of the Sachem's Daughter" who was deserted by her white lover; and "The

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White Maiden and the Indian Girl" in which the wild free life is preferred to civilisation.

The impulse to study the Indian in the flesh and not fancifully did not come first through literature but through painting. The adventurous artist Paul Kane showed the inexhaustible fund of picturesque scene and incident provided by the Indians of the plains. He and his successor Edmund Morris have left on canvas invaluable records of the red man as he was, while some of his fading glory survived. Kane wrote a narrative of his wanderings, and both artists have contacts with poetry: Duncan Campbell Scott's "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" contain glimpses of the painter and his models, and one of Kane's pictures inspires the poem "Cun-ne-wa-bum" by the latest poet of the Indian theme, Katherine Hale. Both poems convey, in their form as well as in words, the freedom and wild beauty of Indian life. In the same category of the purely pictorial stands Pauline Johnson's "The Quill Worker." Two sonnets by Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Onondaga Madonna" and "Watkwenies" are not only strongly etched vignettes of individual figures,

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but haunting embodiments of the irony and pathos with which Indian life is now imbued:

WATKWENIES

(The Woman who Conquers)

Vengeance was once her nation's lore and law :
When the tired sentry stooped above the rill,
Her long knife flashed, and hissed, and drank
its fill ;

Dimly below her dripping wrist she saw
One wild hand, pale as death and weak as
straw,

Clutch at the ripple in the pool ; while shrill
Sprang through the dreaming hamlet on the
hill

The war-cry of the triumphant Iroquois.

Now clothed with many an ancient flap and
fold,

And wrinkled like an apple kept till May,
She weighs the interest-money in her palm,
And, when the Agent calls her valiant name,
Hears, like the war-whoop of her perished
day,

The lads playing snow-snake in the stinging
cold.

The vivid incident told in the opening part
of this sonnet is typical of several stories in

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which Canadian poets illustrate the almost super-human endurance and daring of the Indians. Charles Mair gives voice to their stubborn pride and defiance in "The Iroquois at the Stake"; Charles G. D. Roberts narrates in "How the Mohawks set out for Medoctec" the prompt self-sacrifice which the individual must perform in the cause of the tribe; Pauline Johnson presents the same characteristics in "As Red Men Die" and "Ojistoh." A somewhat different side of the Indian nature, though not inconsistent, is shown by Duncan Campbell Scott in "Forsaken", and "The Mission of the Trees." Here the qualities of self-sacrifice and endurance are exercised for the sake of the family and not of the tribe; and "Forsaken" furthermore shows how this altruism neighbours heartless cruelty. From all these poems one gets a powerful dramatic thrill owing to the unrestrained force of the emotions and their outcome in action of the fiercest kind.

The drama is immensely complicated with the infusion of the European element. The actual conflict on the physical plane, and the spiritual clash of incompatible cultures, are alike rich in tragic suggestion. One of the

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earliest literary representations of the Indians, Charles Mair's stately drama of "Tecumseh", shows the unhappy complications which resulted from even the most honorable alliance of a great chief with the white intruders and their polity. The final effort of the Indians against their supplanters—the North West Rebellion—inspires "A Cry from the Saskatchewan" by John Edward Logan (Barry Dane) and Pauline Johnson's "Cry from an Indian Wife." They give voice to all the bitterness of the unconsidered race which sees half-comprehendingly the loss of its heritage. In "The Cattle Thief" Pauline Johnson emphasises the final degradation, when the Indian's spirit of independence conflicts with the white man's law. The daughter of the cattle-thief, who had been impelled by starvation to raid the settlers, across his corpse denounces the white men:

"What have you left to us of land, what
have you left of game,
What have you brought but evil, and curses
since you came?
How have you paid us for our game? How
paid us for our land?
By a book, to save our souls from the sins
YOU brought in your other hand.

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Go back with your new religion, we never
have understood
Your robbing an Indian's BODY, and mock-
ing his SOUL with food.
Go back with your new religion, and find—
if find you can—
The HONEST man you have ever made from
out a STARVING man.
You say your cattle are not ours, your meat is
not our meat;
When YOU pay for the land you live in,
WE'LL pay for the meat we eat.
Give back our land and our country, give back
our herds of game;
Give back the furs and the forests that were
ours before you came;
Give back the peace and the plenty. Then
come with your new belief,
And blame, if you dare, the hunger that
DROVE him to be a thief."

A similar picture of the discordant mingling of Indian and European ideas is given by Edward William Thomson in three powerful poems. In "Chief Nepoquan's Lament" he shows the defiant and yet bewildered emotions of the old man who is sentenced to death by the white man's justice for a deed to which the grim observances of tribal superstition had impelled him. "The Mandan

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Priest", and "Thunderchild's Lament", which are, like the foregoing poem, dramatic monologues, illustrate the anomaly resulting from Christianity grafted upon the savage and superstitious nature of the aborigine. Thunderchild returns to his tribe, unfitted for their customs, and tragic complexities ensue; the Mandan priest remains in the service of the Mission, but never forgets his savage heritage. The inevitable dissolution of the old life before invading civilisation is unforgettably shown in these three poems. The same theme, treated with more aloof irony, constitutes "The Ballad of Jasper Road," by Katherine Hale.

One other interesting psychological study in this connection is provided by Duncan Campbell Scott's "Half-breed Girl." He subtly suggests the complexities springing from the mingling of diverse blood: a vague unrest, the civilised side of her heredity dimly asserting itself, disturbs the simplicity of her primitive life.

Coming to the poems which relate Indian legends, one finds several distinct types. One may make the general categories of classic and romantic. The former comprises the

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heroic tales which hover on the border between mythology and religion, exercising savants to decide whether they are records of historic persons or allegories of natural phenomena. An important cycle of these, dealing with Gluskap, have been reproduced in blank verse of appropriate dignity by Charles G. D. Roberts and by A. W. H. Eaton, and Gluskap is also the hero of Lady Roddick's graceful mystery play of the Indians' golden age, "The Seekers." The other class comprises tales on the lower plane of folk-lore, dealing with the adventures of ordinary mortals, with an embellishment of ghosts, transformations, nature spirits, and so forth. As the episodes frequently have a conventional "love-interest", they are ideal material for narrative poems of pathos and sentiment. Charles Mair's "Chileeli" may be adduced, and several poems of Pauline Johnson, such as "The Pilot of the Plains", "Dawendine", and the "Ballad of Yaada." The material of these poems frequently recalls the distinctive and haunting charm of the English and Scottish popular ballads, suggesting that the Indian legends might be treated in the simple and direct manner of those ballads. Of course,

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it would require on the poet's part an intuitive sympathy with the Indian spirit: when such a work is approached "from the outside" there is always a formality and superficiality which the reader perceives. But there seems no insurmountable obstacle to prevent a poet, though of alien race, having enough imagination to project himself into the necessary frame of mind for the purpose. This power is displayed to a considerable extent by Constance Lindsay Skinner in her free-verse poems on Indian themes.

While in poetry Canada has no "Hiawatha", in prose she has a "Last of the Mohicans." Indeed Richardson's "Wacousta", produced contemporaneously with Cooper's books, seems to be inheriting at this late date the esteem that Cooper has gradually been losing. Since Richardson's time, however, the Indian's role in Canadian fiction has been a minor one. Apparently the dramatic elements, which we have found effectively used in poetry, have not appealed to anyone as valuable for the more sustained effort of a novel. The noteworthy exception is "The Master of Life" by W. D. Lighthall, an exclusively Indian story.

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So the prose books dealing with Indian life are chiefly in the nature of records and impressions. Professor Charles Hill-Tout's volume on "The Native Races of British North America", ostensibly a scientific work on anthropology, claims attention as literature by reason of its interesting material on customs and superstitions. Marius Barbeau, also a scientific investigator, in "Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies", has undertaken that visualising of the Indian's outlook which I mentioned in connection with poetry. Mabel Burkholder's "Before the White Man Came" is a collection of legends from various sources retold in a popular style.

In this department the Pacific Coast tribes seem to take particular prominence. Their folk-lore has an almost oriental weirdness differing from anything east of the Rockies. Their entirely different mode of life, depending on the canoe instead of the horse, with more shelter and fewer hardships such as famine and cold, decreases the quality of nomadic fierceness and brings out the imaginative traits. The more varied and beneficent natural surroundings have inspired endless legends. Pauline Johnson's "Legends of

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Vancouver" first introduced them to the wider public in a charming literary style. Earlier, Mrs. Martha Douglas Harris had published a little volume in Victoria, and more recently Alfred Carmichael has added to the fund. One of the tales recorded by Professor Hill-Tout has been transmuted by Lionel Haweis into the ballad of "Tsoqalem", with all the grim and uncanny superstition intact.

This survey of the literary representations of the vanishing race, while intended primarily to indicate how much of interest and effectiveness there is in one distinctively Canadian theme, may also perhaps suggest that the potentialities of that theme have not yet been exhausted. The lapse of time is now giving us the necessary perspective for looking at the tragedy of the red man's losing fight against the forces of "civilisation." And yet among the older survivors some recollections of his former state still exist. They will soon go down irretrievably into the darkness, and anything that is not perpetuated by the present generation will be lost. Surely their tragedy of antipathy and conflict and defeat is worthy of a full exposition in literature.

XII

Interpreters of the Habitant



THIS is one of the recurrent events of history for an expanding race to invade and conquer a territory and gradually to impose its culture on the more primitive race previously occupying it. Almost every nation can show at some stage of its history an instance of this invasion; it is one of the causes contributory to the literary importance of the Canadian Indian, since his case is a modern and convenient illustration of the age-old occurrence. But it is less frequently that, when this procedure has been instituted by one nation of advanced civilisation, another such nation intervenes, and is faced with the double task of coming to terms with the party in possession and at the same time carrying on the work of colonisation. Therefore the relations of the French-Canadian and the British-Canadian are a more complex and dif-

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ficult study than the relations of the white man as a generic unit with the Indian. There is not the emphatic contrast in every department of life nor the intrusion of definite—if puzzling—ethical issues. Instead, there is a tangle of misunderstanding, jealousy, and every sort of almost subconscious conflict. So this Canadian theme does not provide literature with the vivid dramatic situations in which the Indian material abounds.

And yet the subtle psychological problems are of great interest: the retention of seventeenth century French speech and customs, now as remote from the land of their ancestry as from the modern British institutions surrounding them; the adaptation of the English language to the requirements of their self-expression; the love of the country, which has had longer time to root itself deeply in the soil than has that of the British population—these are some of the traits of French-Canadian life attractive to any student of that great science which seems to lack an inclusive name, the investigation of the actions and thoughts and feelings of men. For that science, literature provides the true text-books, and the French-Canadian “habi-

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tant" offers a definite contribution which should not be neglected.

Moreover, if literature has any "mission", that mission must be to interpret, and there are few better opportunities for the interpreter than in familiarising the British-Canadian and his French compatriot. I do not mean that the author's attitude should be hortatory, or that he should make any explicit reference at all to problems and prejudices. Mutual understanding is more readily promoted by art, with its air of impartially transcending human limitations, than by any amount of persuasive propaganda. Besides, since the life of the French-Canadian "habitant" is sufficiently picturesque and distinctive to deserve a niche of its own in literature, its simplicity, described quite objectively, has a peculiar charm, and it is for this that most people wish to read about it. If inadvertently they begin to adopt a more sympathetic and tolerant view of bilingual or religious questions as a result, literature will be fulfilling a double service; but the primary thing, after all, is the representation.

So this chapter does not concern itself with books on controversial questions—Robert

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Sellar's publications on one side and William Henry Moore's "The Clash" on the other. It is purely the artistic values of French Canada that are under consideration. Of course, any reference to the "habitant" in literature immediately recalls a well-known name. Just as Pauline Johnson is the accredited representative of the Canadian Indian, so Dr. W. H. Drummond is the accredited representative of the French Canadian. His poetry won a wide audience, being eminently suited for readings in public: he combined a popular vein of humour and pathos, and a happy gift of character delineation, with a marvellous knack of putting into poetry the quaint dialect without appearing to diminish its native simplicity and force.

While Drummond was the first to use the actual "patois" of the French Canadian, he was not the first to recognise his artistic effectiveness. That distinction goes to Mrs. S. Frances Harrison, whose poem "Down the River" is an admirable summary of the picturesque details of "habitant" life. The form of the poem symbolises its dominant impression, using a sequence of the graceful and formal villanelle, redolent of old-world con-

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ventions, to embody her new-world theme. For the old French settlements, Acadia and Quebec, differ from the rest of Canada in their air of precision and stability, established by generations leading a static existence under the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Amid the noble Laurentian scenery these hamlets have a placid charm which Mrs. Harrison depicts in the introduction to her poem:

Well, well, well I see it all:
"Presbytère" and poplars tall,
Wayside cross and lichen'd wall,
Dark-eyed "gamin" brown and fat,
Cheerful "curé" fond of chat,
Sparkling spires among the hills,
Waterfalls and roadside rills,
Blueberries in birch canoes
Brought by boys in wooden shoes,
Cones of berries red and sweet
Brought by girls in bare brown feet,
And behind it all the pride
Of the lofty Laurentide,
Mountain range so misty blue,
All the glorious, peerless view
Of the river flowing down. . . .

In such a setting it is appropriate to find the populace living in idyllic simplicity. Mrs. Harrison describes typical figures, humorous

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good-natured folk, such as the housewife who cheerfully acknowledges marriage at fourteen, and twenty-five children; the capable outspoken spinster; the "curé" merrily gourmand; and many others.

Other writers have also found this simple direct mode of living appropriate for word-pictures. Frank Oliver Call recently published "Blue Homespun", a series of sonnets reminiscent of Millet's paintings. And that this same simplicity is a suitable background for powerful dramatic events is proved by "Maria Chapdelaine" and Marjorie Pickthall's poetic play "The Woodcarver's Wife."

But in spite of so many elements that seem characteristic of the old world, the "habitant's" sojourn in the new world has also contributed to the shaping of his life. The life of the menfolk is bound up with hunting and lumbering, with the forest shanty and above all with the river. Drummond's hero is

Johnnie Courteau of de mountain,
Johnnie Courteau of de hill,
Dat was de boy can shoot de gun,
Dat was de boy can jomp an' run,
And it's not very often you ketch heem still,
Johnnie Courteau!

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Sam' t'ing on ev'ry shaintee
Up on de Mekinac,
Who was de man can walk de log,
W'en w'ole of de reever she's black wit' fog,
An' carry de beeges' load on hees back?
 Johnnie Courteau!

On de rapide you want to see heem
If de raf' she's swingin' roun',
An' he's yellin', "Hooraw, Bateese! good
 man!"
W'y de oar come double on hees han'
W'en he's makin' dat raf' go flyin' down,
 Johnnie Courteau!

The life of the "voyageur" requires men of the greatest hardihood, trained from youth in the handling of logs and with a heredity of "voyageur" ancestors to reinforce the training. It is full of sudden dangers and tragedies, such as the one described by Duncan Campbell Scott in his breathless poem "At the Cedars." With the physical qualities necessitated by these conditions, combined with his Gallic gaiety and rural unsophistication, the French-Canadian is a unique and attractive figure.

A particularly interesting fact is that the "habitant" has cherished many souvenirs of his ancestral land which have there died out

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in the more rapidly evolving culture. Words and idioms of seventeenth century speech survive, as well as the ancient folk-songs, some of which have been translated by William McLennan. That other literary traditions of a more formal nature were also retained was observed by Mrs. Harrison:

The quaint stiff metres of olden France!

Strange, to hear them in Ste. Thérèse,
Metres that speak of duel and dance. . . .

In his sash and toque, with his keen gay glance

Hark to Maxime as he lustily brays
Metres that speak of duel and dance,

Measures that ring with old-world romance,

Ballades, rondels, and virelays,
The quaint stiff metres of olden France.

A troubadour with a whip for a lance,

In his rude calash his song betrays
Metres that speak of duel and dance.

Strange, is it not, by a happy chance

I should hear in the streets of Ste. Thérèse
The quaint stiff metres of olden France,
Metres that speak of duel and dance.

With so many heirlooms that testify his
lineage, it is natural that the French Canadian

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should appeal to any imagination which is supplied with a knowledge of history. The incongruity of his present surroundings with those of his ancestors is a fruitful subject for the literary picture-maker. This romantic association of ideas is suggested to Bernard McEvoy by the figure of "A Waiter at the Hotel Frontenac, Quebec":

Long years ago, in sunny France,
His ancestors—a courtly row—
Forgot their heartaches in the dance,
Or fought, or featly played the beau;
But he, when we our meals attack,
Is just a waiter at Frontenac.

And yet, methinks, some courtly grace,
Distilled from that far distant time,
Informs each movement, decks each pace,
That's worthy of my humble rhyme;
His bow a Brummel might admire,
Or set a grand dame's heart on fire.

One particular heritage from the seventeenth century is that of tale-telling. The genius of Perrault and La Fontaine, strangely transmuted by contact with Indian legends and by the naïve superstitions which have grown up as a result of living amid gloomy

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forests and vicious rivers and harsh northern climate, still lives in humble cottages by the Ottawa and the other streams. A collection of such tales, their quaintness enhanced by their being told in the words of a humorous old "habitant", is Paul Wallace's "Baptiste Larocque." In these fairy tales of the new world the dialect which Dr. Drummond first recorded seems particularly appropriate.

The use of French-Canadian material for narrative purposes has not been extensive. Edward William Thomson's volume "Old Man Savarin Stories" contains four or five tales which employ the humorous or pathetic features of "habitant" life. For the rest, there are Drummond's narratives in verse, ranging from such screaming farce as "De Stove Pipe Hole" to more pathetic episodes.

It must not be concluded, of course, that French-Canadian life is restricted to the careers of the farm and the river. In statecraft, in art, in the business and professional worlds, French Canadians are a numerous and distinguished contingent. In literature there is a brilliant group of workers in the French language. But since true simplicity and unsophistication have become so rare in

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the advance of modern civilization, it is these latter qualities which constitute a particularly welcome relief. When we turn to literature for an antidote to the worries of "practical" affairs, it is like cool spring water in the desert to read of a community where life is unhurried and the natural virtues of human character have a chance to show themselves without disguise, where the reader feels himself participating in a placid existence in which the past still touches hands with the present. In Canada especially, where each generation moves on to utterly new conditions, such a haven of tradition and tranquillity adds a certain counterpoise to offset the general tendency towards innovation. To sojourn for a season, even through the medium of literature, in such surroundings, is an essential experience in every well-balanced life.

XIII

Pioneer and Immigrant



THE literature dealing with distinctive Canadian themes, the most important section, perhaps, is that which treats of the pioneer. It displays to particular advantage that mysterious force within the human spirit which impels men to fare forth from the familiar institutions established by their ancestors, to seek through hardship and unremitting toil some half-perceived ideal of independence. It reveals the capacity of men and women from all walks of life to adapt themselves to unfamiliar conditions, to learn self-reliance, to endure without flinching the privations of backwoods life—in fact, to remodel with their own hands the whole existence of themselves and their posterity. Throughout their story occur incidents of neighbourly assistance, of unselfish service, quietly performed as the

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natural duty of man to man. From such stuff as this was Canada moulded, and it still lies deep at the root of the national spirit. With rapidly developing civilisation many Canadians of the present generation have no personal contact with the conditions under which their forebears created a nation out of the primeval wilderness; but if Canadianism means anything at all, the biggest factor in it must be a knowledge of that obstinate heroism in which the country had its inception. So in literature the story of the pioneer has a double value: to the Canadian it is an essential part of his heritage, an inspiration to sustain him through much that is uninspiring in his daily life; to the general reader it is a revelation of man's capacity for endurance and successful combat with untamed nature.

For the purposes of this chapter the pioneer life of only a small section of Canada can be discussed. The first pioneers, of course, were the French, but the literary records of their colonising are either in their own language or, when in English, in the distinct category of historical romance. So Acadia and Quebec are ruled out, since they had their type of civilisation already established when the

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first English-speaking population arrived. Another limitation also imposes itself: there were unfortunately few among the early pioneers who could spare from their labours the time and energy for a literary record of their experiences. In particular, that magnificent body of settlers to whom the foundation of modern Canada is so largely indebted, the United Empire Loyalists, have left practically no memorials in literature. A poem by William Kirby, "The U.E., a Tale of Upper Canada," having been published as late as 1859, must give their story only at second-hand.

It is among the immigrants from Britain that we find a few expressions in literature of their actual emotions and experiences. If we like, we may take their work as symbolic of Canada's relationship to the Motherland, since they looked backward as well as forward, the loving remembrance of their native soil intensifying the vigour with which they set about the task of initiating the life of new hopes. It was the goad of home-sickness and loneliness that prompted one of the earliest and best-known Canadian poems, variously attributed to John Galt, Dr. "Tiger" Dunlop

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and others, and perhaps being, as it purports, a translation from the Gaelic:

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas;
But still the blood is strong, the heart is
 highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.
Fair these broad meads, these hoary woods
 are grand,
But we are exiles from our fathers' land.

In two poems, "The Far West Emigrant" and "The Emigrant's Address to America", Mrs. Leprohon showed rather naïvely how the loneliness and misery of the new-comer as he first confronted the strange, ungracious prospect of the new life merged into the vision of the prosperity to be wrested from the untapped resources of nature.

An interesting poetical narrative of the immigrant's progress is Alexander McLachlan's "The Emigrant," a monologue in which a Scots pioneer gives his reminiscences. It is in seven sections, entitled, Leaving Home, The Journey, The Arrival, Cutting the First Tree, The Log Cabin, The Indian Battle, Donald Ban (a typical pioneer). In other poems Mc-

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Lachlan gives further pictures of backwoods life, such as "Fire in the Woods." Again an old settler is the speaker :

When first I settled in the woods
There were no neighbours nigh,
And scarce a living thing, save wolves,
And Molly dear, and I.
We had our troubles, ne'er a doubt,
In those wild woods alone;
But then, sir, I was bound to have
A homestead of my own.

This was my field of battle, and
The forest was my foe,
And here I fought with ne'er a thought
Save "lay the giants low."
I toiled in hope, got in a crop,
And Molly watched the cattle . . .

These poems may be accepted as authentic records, as McLachlan himself went through the hardships which he describes, and in "Acres of Your Own" he celebrates the sense of independence that compensates for it all.

Equally authoritative are the prose narratives of three English settlers, two sisters and a brother, who came from the refinements of a cultured home to the privations of cabins in the backwoods. The most famous of these

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books is "Roughing It In the Bush," by Susanna Moodie, a vivid and humorous record of the immigration of herself and her husband, a partially incapacitated army officer. Beneath the debonair surface of the narrative one can perceive the heroic patience and determined cheerfulness with which they endured and vanquished disappointments, failures and privations. Her sister, Catherine Parr Traill, put her similar observations into the form of stories for children, "The Canadian Crusoes", and "Pictures of Life and Scenery in the Woods of Canada, or Lady Mary and Her Nurse." Their brother, Colonel Samuel Strickland, also wrote an account of his pioneering in "Twenty-seven Years in Canada West, or The Experiences of an Early Settler."

These books stand as "original sources" regarding the pioneer days in Ontario almost a century ago, when the first farms were being created out of the impenetrable wilderness. Later authors record the second stage of the development, when the dream of these dauntless pioneers was realized in prosperous homesteads. In Isabella Valancy Crawford's poem, "Malcolm's Katie," old Malcolm Graem,

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owner of broad fields and busy saw-mills,
could yet look back on the time of superhu-
man effort:

I heard him tell

How the first field upon his farm was
ploughed.

He and his brother Reuben, stalwart lads,
Yoked themselves side by side to the new
plough;

Their weaker father, in the grey of life—
But rather the wan age of poverty
Than many winters—in large gnarled hands
The plunging handles held; with mighty
strains

They drew the ripping beak through knotted
sod,

Through tortuous lanes of blackened, smok-
ing stumps,

And past great flaming brush-heaps, send-
ing out

Fierce summers, beating on their swollen
brows.

O such a battle! had we heard of serfs
Driven to like hot conflict with the soil,
Armies had marched and navies swiftly sailed
To burst their gyves. But here's the little
point—

The polished-diamond pivot on which spins
The wheel of difference—they owned the
soil,

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And fought for love, dear love of wealth and
power,
And honest ease and fair esteem of men.
One's blood beats at it!

But even at the later date, when men of Malcolm's period were rich, the pioneering of Canada was not over: it had merely shifted farther west, and we are shown Katie's lover, Maxwell, repeating the drama of long conflict and gradual achievement, feeling again the stern joy with which the pioneer masters his adversary.

And indeed even to-day, on the prairies and in British Columbia, the same task is scarcely completed. But it is a subject beyond the scope of the present treatment, for the modern appliances, the admixture of foreign races, and the different natural background, considerably affect the circumstances, though the motive is essentially the same. For the purposes of this study it is more appropriate to point out that, within the memory of writers now living, the life in the country parts of Ontario was not very far removed from that of the pioneer period. The farms had been established by an earlier generation, but they

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were still being extended, and there was little access to the centres of population. Therefore the old pioneer virtues of self-reliance and neighbourliness, the general simplicity of life, still survived. With entertaining records of this phase of life Canadian literature is well supplied. The rhymes of "The Khan" (R. K. Kernighan) celebrate the threshings and barn-raisings and all the chores of farm life. Thomas O'Hagan's "Songs of the Settlement" treat of similar events in the simple hearty style which suits them. In prose, there are the Glengarry books of Ralph Connor, showing how the hardy Highland stock had adapted itself to the new country, or rather adapted the new country to itself, since so many of the old Highland customs were still preserved intact. An admirable picture of village life in Ontario forty years ago is drawn in Fred Jacob's novel "Day Before Yesterday." Concerning himself mainly with character-portrayal Mr. Jacob has ample opportunity to introduce much historical material. The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada is used as a background for "The Only Girl", a historical novel by Emily P. Weaver. Recently Newton MacTavish has published "Thrown In", a col-

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lection of sketches drawn from his recollections of a youth spent in a rural settlement. In the work of Peter McArthur, too, there are recurrent snapshots of his early days and the old people who formed a link between that time and the real pioneer era.

The records of particular pioneer groups have recently been perpetuated by Mabel Dunham in "The Trail of the Conestoga", Helen Williams in "Spinning Wheels and Homespun", Isabel Skelton in "The Backwoods-Woman."

Such are the literary records of the pioneer spirit in which the present Dominion of Canada had its inception. From the proportion of the country's population to its extent and untouched resources, it is obvious that the same spirit will have to survive for a long time yet if the country is to fulfil the destiny which those first settlers made possible. And apart from material advances, if Canada as a spiritual entity is to contribute anything of value to the solving of the world's present confusion—and with her combination of unpolluted natural force and keen northern vitality, what country has a better endowment

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for doing so?—it will be along very nearly the lines that those sturdy pioneers laid down.

In the earlier chapters of "Candid Chronicles", by Hector Charlesworth we are reminded that "not all who helped to bring in-to being the Canada of to-day were in the narrower conception of the term, 'pioneers'." The lawyers, journalists, politicians, artists, actors and musicians of the Canada of 1876 to 1900 are the principals in this, the most noteworthy book of its type in many years.

The tide of immigration still consists largely of people actuated by the old contradictory impulses of love for the homeland and hope of independence and prosperity in the new world. Lewis Milligan's poem, "The Beckoning Skyline," reconsiders the theme of McLachlan's "Emigrant" in the spirit of modern psychology, and shows that still from the English city, as then from the Scottish shieling, come men and women of high resolve to shape their future in the land of promise, while retaining their affectionate regard for the home of their fathers.

All this is ideal material for a national epic, fit to regain the epic's old status of an inspiring and guiding force in the nation's life. It

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might become an Aeneid of the new world, with the added advantage of being based on demonstrable lines instead of being an artificial reconstruction of traditions. As a miniature model of the Canadian epic we have Edward William Thomson's "Peter Ottawa", in which the protagonist, child of mingled races, descendant of pioneers and himself a pioneer of the farther west, stands as the typical "Canadian nativist."

So in the distinctive literature of Canada the pioneers deserve a place of honour. The existing poems and sketches to which I have referred are far from commensurate with their importance in the history and in the very character of the country. The record of their deeds will ever be available material for the novelist and poet, and their spirit will be abundant inspiration for a real national literature. Recognition of their greatness is niggardly and belated enough, but that it is not entirely absent is proved by several poems in their honour. One is by William Douw Lighthall, from which two stanzas may be quoted:

Where'er you look, their work is there;
Now land and man are free:

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On every side the view grows fair,
And perfect yet shall be.

The credit's theirs, who all day fought
The stubborn giant hosts;

We have but built on what they wrought,
Theirs were the honor-posts.

Each hewed, and saw a dream-like home!
Hewed on—a settlement!

Struck hard—through mists the spire and
dome

The distance rim indent!

So honoured be they midst your ease,

And give them well their due,

Honour to those who fought the trees

And made a land for you!

And in the same vein Peter McArthur sings:

Let those who reap the fields they sowed,

The softer generations,

Pay homage to the brawny men

Who laid the first foundations!

Just now we're full of youth and pride,

But maybe when we're older

We'll honour those who made our land

With shoulder set to shoulder.

Chorus:

They worked their will and ate their fill

And rested from their labours.

God bless them all, both great and small,

Who made our Land of Good Neighbours!

XIV

Dominion and Empire



AMONG the great and successful administrative experiments which are prominent in British history, there is none more significant than the British North America Act. The whole modern organisation of the British empire—possibly its very existence—is traceable to that first conception of the self-governing dominion. For many years Canada bore alone the brunt of the experiment, solving as best she could the unprecedented problems which occurred on every hand. Canada had worked out her salvation by the time that the other colonial territories began to organise self-government, and they profited by her experiences. The success of her efforts may be gauged by the fact that Professor W. P. M. Kennedy's book on the Canadian Constitution was used as the basis when the constitution of the Irish Free State was being drafted. Canada was the pioneer in the reorganised

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governmental system of the British empire, and remains the model.

The subject is naturally fascinating to the student of history and political science. Professor Kennedy's book is but one of many, such as Agnes Laut's "Canadian Commonwealth" and Sir Hamar Greenwood's "Canada as an Imperial Factor." Books of this sort, however, must be left out of account in a study of Canadian literature which is concerned with the imaginative and artistic elements. But it happens that the subject is so important to Canadians that it finds its way into their imaginative and artistic productions as well as being in their text-books and scholarly monographs. The extent to which Canada can develop a national spirit of her own, the attitude of Canadians towards the mother country and the empire as a whole—these are matters which move Canadians deeply enough to arouse strong emotion, and which therefore are given an outlet in poetry.

The earlier patriotic poems of Canada are sufficiently conventional. Sangster wrote a "Song for Canada" which affirms in swinging metre that her sons love their country and are prepared to defend it. In the same strain

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is "The Maple Leaf Forever", sometimes considered the country's national anthem, which includes a compendious review of Canadian history. It is now generally recognised that "O Canada" is a tune worthy for its moving and dignified beauty to be the national anthem, but no set of words in English has yet proved wholly satisfactory as a rendering of Routhier's original. Indeed, for the finest Canadian patriotic poetry one turns to the work of the French writers, such as Crémazie and LeMay, who are inspired by a passionate love for the country and its early history; the English-speaking poets, less firmly rooted in the Canadian soil, tend to regard the country rather as a political or sentimental abstraction.

As typical of the conventional patriotic verse of Sangster and Muir and Agnes Maule Machar may be quoted a couple of stanzas by William Wye Smith:

Here's to the Land of the rock and the pine:
Here's to the Land of the raft and the river!
Here's to the Land where the sunbeams shine,
And the night that is bright with the North-
light's quiver!

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Here's to the buckwheats that smoke on her
board;
Here's to the maple that sweetens their
story;
Here's to the scythe that we swing like a
sword;
And here's to the fields where we gather our
glory!

And so on "ad infinitum." For catholic enthusiasm, as for tyrannous rhythm, it cannot well be surpassed. But it needs a touch of more reflective beauty to transmute it from a catalogue into a poem. Somewhat nearer to this ideal is "The Canadian Abroad" by E. W. Thomson:

When the veils of a shining lake vista unfold,
Or the mist towers dim from a fall,
Or a woodland is blazing in crimson and gold,
Or a snow shroud is covering all,
Or there's honking of geese in the darkening
sky,
When the spring sets hepatica free,
Then my heart's winging north as they never
can fly,
Wherever I happen to be.

The effort to summarise Canada's charms in the compass of a brief poem seems always to

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entail a breathless enumeration. So the finest expression of the love for the actual soil and conditions of Canada is to be found in the poems which deal with individual localities and which therefore cannot be accurately described as "patriotic poetry."

A different note supervenes in the poems which touch on Canada's distinctive national spirit and her international relations. The forerunner of this development was Charles Mair, a stalwart of the "Canada First" party of 1868. His lines "In Memory of William A. Foster" are imbued with the spirit of that movement, which was essentially forward-looking in its purpose. There is much of Tennyson's influence to be traced in the ideal expressed, but it is a clear precursor of the point of view still held in Canada. Expressing the message of Foster, the poet writes:

"But mark, by fate's strong finger traced,
Our country's rise; see time unfold,
In our own land, a nation based
On manly deeds, not lust for gold.

"Nor lessened would the duty be
To rally, then, around the Throne;
A filial nation, strong and free—
Great Britain's child to manhood grown!

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“But lift the curtain which deceives,
The veil that intercepts the sight,
The drapery dependence weaves
To screen us from the nobler light.

“First feel throughout the throbbing land
A nation’s pulse, a nation’s pride—
The independent life—then stand
Erect, unbound, at Britain’s side!”

And many a year has fled, and now
The tongue that voiced the thought is
stilled;
The veil yet hangs o’er many a brow,
The glorious dream is unfulfilled.

Yet Ocean unto Ocean cries!
For us the mighty tides go forth.
We front the sun—behind us lies
The mystery of the unconquered North!

The poem ends with a confident assertion
that Foster’s dream will eventually be
realised.

A particularly interesting poem of Mair’s
is “Kanata.” Beginning with a charming per-
sonification of the country and a sketch of the
idyllic Indian life, it confronts the problems
of the present and future with little of the
popular optimism. He sees the difficulty of
the immigration problem, branding as a vain

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delusion the theory that Europe's oppressed and impoverished people, suddenly transplanted to Canada, will find ideal freedom and equality. He points out that the motive of gain and self-advancement is potent in Canada:

Here man's own vile and selfish schemes
Will yet enact the tyrant's part.

The battle for liberty must be maintained as persistently as ever in the New World against these forces of unrighteousness.

The finest poems produced by the awakening sense of nationhood in the young dominion were those of Charles G. D. Roberts, "Ode for the Canadian Confederacy", "Collect for Dominion Day", and "Canada." The "Collect" is a dignified sonnet, a prayer for the unity which alone can promote the future greatness of "our scant people." The "Ode" achieves a largeness of effect which adequately embodies the poet's picture of the gigantic young nation still slumbering, but about to rouse itself to confront its destiny. There is brooding power in the lines:

A deep voice stirs, vibrating in men's ears
As if their own hearts throbbed that
thunder forth,

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A sound wherein who hearkens wisely hears
The voice of the desire of this strong
North,—

This North whose heart of fire
Yet knows not its desire

Clearly, but dreams, and murmurs in the
dream.

The hour of dreams is done. Lo on the
hills the gleam!

Finest of all, perhaps, is the poem entitled
simply "Canada", and opening with the invo-
cation:

O Child of Nations, giant-limbed,
Who stand'st among the nations now
Unheeded, unadorned, unhymned,
With unanointed brow. . . .

With impassioned earnestness the poet demands how long his country will hesitate to trust its own strength and to "bear a nation's franchise." He points to the expansion of Canadian trade and adduces the heroic annals of Canadian history. He refers to the expatriated Canadians and to those who had just died on imperial service in Egypt. The whole poem is a stirring expression of Canada's claims to the rank of nation, and a

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trumpet call for everyone who believed that the opportunity was at hand.

Since the eighties this note has been less audible in Canadian literature. Canada's development towards self-dependence proceeded without the "éclat" that Mair and Roberts predicted. Twenty-five years later than their poems are those of J. D. Logan in his "Songs of the Makers of Canada", and his work has not their undertone of unrest. The opening "Ode to Canada" contrasts European anarchy with Canadian peaceful expansion, and the epilogue, "The True Imperialism", exhorts Canada to achieve her fated destiny, echoing Mair's "Kanata" in sounding a caution against materialism:

. . . Mark how the saddened throngs who
 never knew the reign
Of kindly Law and Plenty flock to thy
 domain;

Take them as children for thine own!

Turn not, as avaricious nations in the past,
To thrall of riches and the rule of might: at
 last

Relentless Fate wrought out their fall. . .

Logan's most impressive poem, "Land Blest with Youth," reiterates that the predestined

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task of Canada is service for the race, directed towards the eventual brotherhood of man.

The latest poet of the national theme, Wilson MacDonald, shows that Mair's warning and Logan's exhortation were in vain: in "A Song to Canada" he declares that his land is given up to the quest of gold, to the exclusion of "the old wounding message of truth" and the appeal of beauty. He contrasts man's materialistic interests with the natural magnificence of the country, and exclaims bitterly:

My land is a woman whose boast
Is of iron and of stone.
She hath thrown
To the wind
All that yielded her most.
And tonight she must walk with the blind.
And this is my grief that her gold and her gain
Buys never a fragment of joy,
A morsel of truth or of honour a grain
Or a love that is free from alloy.

To idealists, pledged, like Logan and MacDonald, to the cause of universal brotherhood, the splendid dawn which Roberts heralded seems farther away than ever. The national characteristic which Canada is manifesting to them

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can scarcely be termed a national spirit, being anything but spiritual.

To certain other observers, however, a finer quality is perceptible in the country. They find it in the relation of the dominion with the motherland. Ever since the time of John Talon-Lesperance's popular song "Empire First", the theme of love for England has had its place in Canadian poetry. One of the finest poems which it produced is Wilfred Campbell's "England", an ecstatic pæan of the empire's greatness:

And we of the newer and vaster West,
Where the great war-banners are furled,
And commerce hurries her teeming hosts,
And the cannon are silent along our coasts,
Saxon and Gaul, Canadians claim
A part in the glory and pride and aim
Of the Empire that girdles the world.

The poem ranks with Henley's "England, my England" and the best of Kipling, at the highest point of inspiration which the imperial spirit has produced.

There can be no doubt that the immense vogue of Kipling was largely responsible for the new note in Canadian poetry. Another contributing factor was Canada's participation

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in the Boer War. This event is celebrated, for example, in "From Canada" by Frederick George Scott, a reverent proffering of Canada's service to the beloved "Mother and Queen." The same poet wrote a dignified "Hymn of Empire" in the "Recessional" category, a stirring patriotic song called "The Colours of the Flag", and a poem entitled "Canada" which belongs rather with the Roberts and Logan pieces as a vision of Canada's destined eminence in the new dispensation of peace and brotherhood.

If the Boer War aroused Canadian imperialism, the great European War doubly confirmed it. The Kipling echo had persisted in Canadian verse, notably in the work of Robert Stead. "The Charity Ward", published in 1908, is a vigorous propaganda poem condemning Canada for non-participation in imperial defence, and in other poems, such as "Manhood's Estate" and "Mother and Son", he embodies kindred topics. The manner and method of Kipling is clear in them all. The War inspired Stead to more mature and restrained expression, as in "The Awakening", "England", and "The Call", depictions of Canada's response to Britain's summons.

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Several poems by Douglas Durkin, one also entitled "The Call" and another "The Fighting Men of Canada", are in the key of Stead's work, as is "The Reckoning" by Theodore Goodridge Roberts. Less in the conventional swing of war-time poetry is Lloyd Roberts' "Come Quietly, Britain!"

The closer unity of Canada and England which the war promoted not only intensified the affection of Canadians for the mother country as an abstract principle, but also made them more familiar, either by experience or imaginative effort, with the charm of the English countryside and the power it exerts over her sons. Typical of this point of view is "England's Fields" by Lloyd Roberts and "The Canadian" by Jesse Edgar Middleton. The latter is a particularly effective picture of the overseas attitude:

I never saw the cliffs of snow,
The Channel billows tipped with cream,
The restless eddying tides that flow
About the Island of my dream.
I never saw the English downs
Upon an April day,
The quiet old Cathedral towns,
The hedgerows white with may.

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And still the name of England
Which tyrants laugh to scorn
Can thrill my soul. It is to me
A very bugle-horn.

A thousand leagues from Plymouth shore,
In broader lands I saw the light.
I never heard the cannon roar
Or saw a mark of England's might;

Save that my people lived in peace,
Bronzed in the harvest sun,
And thought that tyranny would cease,
That battle-days were done.

And still the flag of England
Streamed on a friendly breeze,
And twice two hundred ships of war
Went surging through the seas.

As an expression of the love of England which binds to her by invisible ties of sentiment the later generations of her colonists, and of the gratitude for more tangible favours in the form of defense and sustenance, Middleton's poem is representative of what is probably the most widely prevailing attitude towards imperial problems in Canada at the present time.

This chapter has concerned itself chiefly with poetry, as the most frequent literary re-

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flection of national spirit and patriotic feeling. Their embodiment in fiction is a more indirect and incidental affair. For example, there is Augustus Bridle's "Hansen", a study of the national quality of the country through the "Canadianising" of a typical immigrant; and in the other tradition there is Beckles Willson's "Redemption", which includes discussions of the dominion from the imperialistic viewpoint. Many other novels touch on matters of Canadian statecraft or imperial relations, but can hardly be considered as dealing primarily with the patriotic theme.

In general, then, the department of Canadian literature which presents her distinctive features as a political entity follows a definite line of development. Beginning with patriotic songs of conventional sentiment and imagery—an impulse which suffocated itself in vain efforts to condense all Canada's charms in a few stanzas—it gained a new vitality from the sanguine ambitions of the young expanding dominion. This "motif" found its strongest expression in the work of Mair and Roberts, and gradually gave place to the theme of imperial responsibility, under the successive influences of Kipling, the Boer

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War, and the Great War. Canada's share in the sacrifices and honours of the war and her rapid accession to a suffrage in international deliberations has confirmed, at least for the time, the note of mingled self-respect and filial affection in the country's relation with the empire. It does not seem improbable that Canadian literature should soon begin to foreshadow the future trend of Canada's national consciousness.

Down to the Sea in Ships

THE first impressions received by the traveller from Europe as he approaches Canada are sufficiently bleak. In most months of the year he will gain at least a nodding acquaintance with ice-bergs, and their attendant fog. The first land sighted is of the most barren description. And the first human activity encountered is likely to be a contingent of Grand Banks fishing boats, their salt-bitten crews in oilskin armor and their holds full of cold-looking gray fish from the colder and grayer depths of the surrounding ocean. The traveller will probably recall Kipling's "Captains Courageous" and be profoundly glad that there is little danger of his ever having to earn a living at so harsh and exacting a trade.

Yet the life of this hardest element of the Canadian population has its own particular

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attraction. Not only for those more prosperous ones who can enjoy their "spell ashore" in some quaint Nova Scotia port, but also for those who spend all their days on the wind-ravaged and wave-lashed Labrador coast, there is some fierce charm in the sea-faring life, if one is to believe the report of the literary men who have lived among them and depicted their ways. The endless battle against their inveterate foe, the insatiable sea, is somehow recompensed by the element of grim gambling and the profound satisfaction of every hard-won success. It is an impressive illustration of the primitive heroic quality in men, the unreasoning instinct to maintain indomitably the conflict against all the cruelest forces that nature can oppose to them.

The first Canadian author to take advantage of the literary possibilities of this maritime life was Norman Duncan. By sojourning among the Labrador folk and winning their confidence by sympathy and tact, he came to know the spirit of their simple vigorous lives. Although he had never before been in close contact with the ocean, he recognised the quality of its spell, and captured it

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in his stories. Duncan has been compared to Dickens and Bret Harte for his idealising and moralistic tendency. Some of his books were admittedly written for boys, and there is a boyish air about them all. The dramatic contrasts to which he was addicted, the tenderness of his treatment of women and children, the frank pathos of his situations, are wholly unsophisticated. In Canadian literature his kinship is with Ralph Connor, but where Connor's work depends on strength of general conception, Duncan's depends on a sense of humour and skill in the individual episode. Connor employs the technique of the novel, Duncan that of the short story—a talent strangely rare among Canadians. So Duncan's work gives an impression of ease and technical mastery which is attractive.

His ingenuousness is entirely in keeping with the characters and emotions which he represents. Against an effectively described background of the stormy ocean he presents the spiritual conflicts and pathetic episodes which occur "down north" where human motives are not complicated by the endless incidental considerations of society. As a result he created a group of characters which lives

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in the reader's memory, an achievement which—as the example of Dickens shows—is greater than the construction of a well-wrought novel. By the possession of humour and sympathy Duncan gave the Labrador folk a secure place in Canadian literature.

It is often suggested that Norman Duncan's famous "Dr. Luke" was modeled upon the equally famous Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, who has himself done much to make the life of the fishermen familiar to outsiders. In an appreciation of Norman Duncan, Dr. Grenfell characterises their life: "It is said of our people that they are born with a netting needle in their hand and an axe by the side of their cradle. Existence is a daily struggle with adamantine facts and conditions; and quick practical response is, often enough, the only dividing line between life and death." Dr. Grenfell's sketches of this rugged life are based on real incidents and his knowledge of the local colour is the result of many years devoted to welfare work among the people.

Dr. Grenfell is the subject of a biography by Dillon Wallace, who has also used the Labrador setting for books of adventure for boys. Theodore Goodridge Roberts likewise

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has located adventure yarns among the grand banks and adjoining coasts.

The most prominent recent recorder of the sea-faring life, however, is Frederick William Wallace, whose books reveal their quality in the titles, such as "Blue Water", "Salt Seas and Sailor Men", "The Shack Locker." Wallace differs from Norman Duncan in that he had a first hand acquaintance with the sea before he embarked on authorship. The result is that whereas Duncan subordinates realistic detail to human interest and the inward spirit of the life he depicts, Wallace uses his fictitious narrative simply as a vehicle for sketches of actual conditions at sea. "The Viking Blood", for instance, merely chronicles a boy's voyage on a four-master barque from the Clyde to Vancouver and his subsequent employment in the Grand Banks fishing fleet. Upon this slender thread of plot are strung vivid glimpses of the sea in all its moods and the daily life of sailors and fishermen. The author's practical knowledge of seamanship enables him to present his material in a direct convincing manner that makes the reader feel that he is participating in the life recorded.

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Wallace's latest book of this type, "Wooden Ships and Iron Men," is in the nature of a history of the period which has now passed from existence and is rapidly passing from human memory—when the sailing vessels which traded out of Canadian ports, commanded by "ramping, stamping, hard-driving Bluenose" skippers, were famous on all the seven seas. Those days, when the tonnage of the Canadian merchant marine ranked fourth in the world, were an important era of Canadian development, as well as being highly picturesque and adventurous as literary material. Wallace has assembled a group of typical records of voyages and adventures, which make the vanished era live again with its romance and hardships.

The same desire to capture the rapidly disappearing narratives of the country's former maritime glories is responsible for Archibald MacMechan's books, "Sagas of the Sea" and "Old Province Tales." The stirring episodes of Nova Scotia history, so closely bound up with the Atlantic and the sea-going life, are lovingly reproduced in these volumes.

The poetic values of the North Atlantic life have been investigated only recently by

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two writers. "Bill Boram" is a narrative poem by Robert Norwood, which may be described as an episode in the manner of Norman Duncan presented in the manner of John Masefield. The elemental types of character, the humour and vividness of the descriptions, the idealistic tendency, are points of resemblance with the Duncan stories. The depiction of "The Cove" and its inhabitants is realistic:

The Cove lies partly landlocked from the sea.
Its arms enclose a huddle of white homes
Red-roofed above its shacks and wharves. To
me

..Earth has no beauty like those roofs of red
Against the dark green spruce when twilight
falls

Upon The Cove. An island lifts its head
Midway between the shores that curve to form
A nearly oval harbour—quarter mile
At widest point—where, safe from any storm,
A score of schooners, in the noisy while
Of their unloading cargoes of the catch
Tug at their anchors. . .

"The Cov'ers," as they always have been
called,
Are bred of Dutch and Anglo-Saxon stock.

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The women go short-kirtled and red-shawled,
Clicking their needles on a gray wool sock
To time their talking. They can bake, weave,
 hem,
Bear husky babies to the lads they love,
Minding their business as the men mind them:
There are no suffrage squabbles at The Cove.
The men are short, broad-shouldered as a
 kedge,
With diapason voices of the sea
That breaks in throated thunder on the ledge
Near Dorey's Light. Rough-humored blas-
 phemy
Cuts through their talk. . .

The poem is full of memorable pictures—of the fish-house romantically named “The Belle Mahone”, of all-night dances to old fiddled reel-tunes, of the “Lottie S.” and her blasphemous skipper, a drunkard ashore and a martinet at sea. The routine of the fishing fleet is described:

Our dories rode the sliding hills of sea,
And lurked within their hollows where the
 blue
Sky seemed to roof us over. Bitingly
Bill cursed us, and we cursed in turn at him,
Because the cod were scarce; and day by day
We came back almost empty, save a skim

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Of haddock and the like. We worked away
From cold, wet, dismal dawns to gusty dark
And made the Lottie by her dipping light,
Cursing in chorus. . .

The life of these people is so simple, dominated by a single entity—the ocean—and devoted to a single calling, that the poem, without seeming overburdened with detail, presents a synoptic view of the whole locality. The Cove and the schooner and the skipper are representative of the entire segment of Canadian life with which this chapter is concerned.

The other poet who has approached the topic is E. J. Pratt, whose "Newfoundland Poems" are brief sketches of the grim landscape, the stark tragedy and bitter irony of sea-faring life, and the ocean's predominance. The uncompromising directness of his presentation well interprets the prevailing tone of the material he handles, and subsequent poem of his—"The Cachalot"—is a noteworthy addition to our literature of the sea.

Considering the fact that the fisherfolk form so small and isolated a factor in the Canadian population, they have been unusually

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well interpreted in literature. The reason is probably that their life illustrates in its most elemental terms the conflict of man with the severest natural obstacles. The simplicity of the situation is so fully in harmony with the ingenuous quality of Canadian narrative method that this naïveté, which in books on other themes tends to be a weakness, is an artistic virtue. The writer who is competent to record honestly and sympathetically his observations of existence on the Grand Banks is more likely to produce a satisfying picture than the more pretentious literary artist could convey by subtle shading and indirection.

The Land of Open Spaces

THE prevailing bigness of things in Canada, which reduces man to such infinitesimal proportions when he is compared with a mountain or a river or a forest, is nowhere better represented than by the prairies. This illimitable plain, occupying the whole central tract of the country, comprising three large provinces, displays itself day after day to the traveller, until he begins to lose faith in the speed of his monstrous transcontinental train, so unequal to the task of vanquishing the country's passive resistance. On the prairies every human activity has necessarily been practised on a proportionate scale, so their history, although not long, is a sequence of superhuman undertakings. The original reduction to order and obedience required the special creation of the renowned mounted police; the provision of settlers entailed some of the vastest railway building of the world;

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the final exploitation of the country has necessitated a complete revulsion in agricultural methods to give man control over such immense spaces. Each of the eras is of epic magnitude.

One of the first efforts to reproduce in literary form the essential characteristics of the prairies was that of Lieut. W. F. Butler in "The Great Lone Land." This officer, who later became Sir William Butler, a famous South African general, was sent in 1870 to investigate the almost unknown territory west of Fort Garry. Travelling westward the nine hundred miles to the Rockies, he wheeled north to Edmonton and descended the Saskatchewan river to Lake Winnipeg, thus making a comprehensive circuit of the territory. His record contains useful notes on the Indian life and acute opinions as to the country's possibilities. It was on his recommendation that the mounted police force was established.

More recently, writers have dealt with the history of the prairies' development. The original explorers live again in Lawrence J. Burpee's "Search for the Western Sea" and Agnes Laut's "Pathfinders of the West" and

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"The Conquest of the Great Northwest." The first important settlement — the intrepid Highland contingent which Lord Selkirk established in Manitoba—figures in R. G. MacBeth's "Romance of Western Canada", the author being a son of one of the original settlers. Dr. MacBeth has chronicled two of the other most impressive factors in the expansion of the west in "Policing the Plains" and "The History of the Canadian Pacific Railway." Finally, the eventual industrial problems and the organisation which they brought about are the basis of Hopkins Moorhouse's "Deep Furrows."

The latter book, employing the methods of fiction to convey historical material, forms a transition to the novels which deal with prairie life. Surprisingly few Canadian authors have used the conventional material of cow-boys and mounted police which is so dear to magazine writers of the United States and England. The best indigenous productions of the type are Luke Allen's cowboy stories, Sergeant Kendall's mounted police stories, and Harwood Steele's "Spirit of Iron", these latter being based on first-hand knowledge of "the force." The early days of

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lawlessness are reflected in W. A. Fraser's "Bulldog Carney" and Douglas Durkin's story of the railway-builders, "The Heart of Cherry McBain." The most famous novelist of those days when the prairie was real "frontier" is Ralph Connor, who uses this material in "Corporal Cameron" and "The Patrol of the Sundance Trail." Unhappily, none of these books is of distinguished literary value.

With these exceptions, the Canadian novels of the prairies tend to the study of social conditions or the realistic presentation of actual every-day existence. They range from the somewhat ponderously sentimental stories of Robert Stead, "Neighbors" and "The Smoking Flax", through Arthur Stringer's more sombre trilogy of the Prairie wife, mother, and child, to the stark and crude strength of Onoto Watanna's "Cattle." All of these depict the monotonous, solitary life of the farmer, doomed to ceaseless toil and discomfort as he combats the climate and the power of loneliness. The cabins which crouch as if vainly seeking to efface themselves in the shelterless plain are eloquent alike of the bitter winter storms and merciless summer heat and of the helpless impotence and soli-

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tude which the settler feels as he confronts his destiny. No wonder that the novels which depict the life in those cabins should tend to create an atmosphere of depression, and the latest and most artistic, Martha Ostenso's "Wild Geese", does nothing to change that impression.

One of the most interesting aspects of prairie life, however, is the converse of its loneliness, namely, the rapid increase in population. The mushroom growth of its cities is almost incredible. The mingling of races in the immigrant stream is a serious sociological problem. The latter topic has been treated from various points of view by Ralph Connor in "The Foreigner", Sir Gilbert Parker in "The World For Sale", and Laura Goodman Salverson in "The Viking Heart." Connor is chiefly concerned with the sociological problem, Parker with the picturesque grafting of European folk-customs on western life, Mrs. Salverson with the epic grandeur of the settlers' conflict and victory. Finally, Frederick Philip Grove in "Settlers of the Marsh" has shown the psychological changes produced in the immigrant by the new life.

The sudden springing up of cities, with all

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the attendant complications of big business undertakings, speculation and intrigue, gives further material for fiction. Robert Stead uses it in "The Cowpuncher." The commercial importance of the Winnipeg wheat-pit figures in "The Magpie" by Douglas Durkin. The political crises of the provinces appear in "Purple Springs" by Nellie McClung and "The Shadow Riders" by Isabel Patterson. The latter writer has given another distinguished realistic picture of social life on the prairies in "The Magpie's Nest." All these novels reveal the unrest, the sense of potentialities as yet unfulfilled, the triumph of material ambition with its crude make-shifts, which still characterise the young civilisation of the prairie provinces. The composite picture to which they all contribute is of a vigorous, enterprising populace, striving to build up a great social and economic organisation as rapidly as the previous eras of the region's history succeeded each other. It is on the breath-taking scale of bigness and with the startling disregard for tradition that was necessarily developed in men who had to cope with the prairies on their own terms. The novels are marked to a

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greater or less degree with the flaws of crudity and rashness which mark also the events depicted. But both novels and events have something of the virile prairie wind blowing through them, giving a sense of power and promise which the flaws only enhance.

Passing on from the novel, one encounters one of the infrequent Canadian dramas in "Tiger Rose" by Willard Mack, a conventional story of half-breeds and mounted police. The realistic impulse of the prairie novels has not yet extended to plays, but the active Little Theatre groups of the country may soon evolve some powerful stage material from the drama of every-day life on lonely farms or in booming cities.

In poetry the prairies have never been adequately represented. Nicholas Flood Davin claimed for his "Eos, an epic of the dawn" the distinction of being the first work of pure literature produced in the North-West territories, and the poem contains some descriptions of the country, as well as a florid vision of its future greatness. Belonging to the same period is Charles Mair's description in "The Last Bison." More lately Duncan

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Campbell Scott has turned his exquisite pictorial skill to the prairie scene in "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris." Robert Stead has tried to do for the prairie what Service did for the North, versifying typical episodes of prairie life in "A Prairie Heroine", "The Squad of One", etc., and elsewhere giving voice to the dominant moods of the country and to representative emotions—the dogged pluck of the pioneer, the insane terror induced by loneliness, the homesteader's sense of independence and achievement. The poet might capture something of the prairies' expansiveness and virgin candour, were it not for the derivative and facile nature of his technical methods and emotional effects.

Probably the finest expression of the plains within the compass of a single poem is Wilson MacDonald's "Song of the Prairie Land." He brings out the essential contrast between the complicated life of cities, where superficial observances efface the eternal verities, and the inevitable confronting of truth which is forced on every man who submits himself to the prairies' power. The vast procession of the winds and stars and dawns assume their primitive importance and the poem cele-

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brates the pageant with fitting dignity and verve.

The keynote of Canadian history has always been set by the pioneer. The original impetus was given by the pioneering adventurers from the Old World, and the later expansion of the country was due to the same spirit. On the prairie it had its final and most ample opportunity, and showed itself as potent as ever. Of this latest manifestation the novels and poems of prairie life give an authentic picture. None of them is perfect as a work of art, but that may follow when the prairie civilisation assumes firmer form and texture. Meanwhile, the plains are among the most vital economic factors of Canada, and their literature too has a vitality which seems to give promise of being a dominating factor in Canadian letters.

North of Fifty-Three

VER since the fatally fascinating chimera of the North-west passage imposed itself on the imagination of explorers, the far north of the American continent has had an importance wholly disproportionate to its lonely and largely unexplored solitude. It has become one of the immense half-embodied ideas that lend a touch of romance and mystery to the otherwise platitudinous equipment of the public mind. Now-a-days the vision of the north-west passage has been supplanted by that of a world-supply of reindeer-meat and an air route across the northern hemisphere, but the romantic quality of the vision remains.

To outsiders, the whole of Canada has come to be identified with her northernmost reaches. Tennyson introduced the idea into literature with his line about "that true north" and Kipling followed suit with "our lady of the snows." From that distinguished

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level the theory spread to the modern magazine and moving-picture, encouraged by the fact that the most widely popular Canadian poet emanated from the Klondyke and depicted it in his rhymes. So the Far North has come to be synonymous with Canada, and many Canadian writers have fortified the tradition by using the picturesque setting and incidents which the North affords. The very fact that the scene is inaccessibly remote from the experience of the vast majority of Canadians makes it the more popular as romantic material.

The first recognition of the North as a literary territory was in the work of Robert M. Ballantyne, whose books have been beloved by generations of boys. In 1840 he was appointed as a clerk with the Hudson's Bay Company, and became familiar with the life of the scattered posts in the northern wilderness. His first book was a diary-record "Hudson's Bay, or Every-Day Life in the Wilds of North America" and among his eighty subsequent volumes there were many which dealt with the same scene, such as "Ungava", "The Young Fur-Traders", and "The World of Ice."

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Among Ballantyne's successors in the successful writing of books for boys there was a Canadian, J. Macdonald Oxley, who used the Northern setting for several of his books, including "Up Among the Ice Floes", "Archie of Athabasca." Like Ballantyne, he had an easy vivid style and a touch of humour, qualities which make the books of both authors admirable for their purpose. A more recent writer who has woven excellent adventure stories concerning the territory of ice and Esquimaux is Alan Sullivan.

The history of Northern Canada was for so many years identified with that of the Hudson's Bay Company that a northern story was not complete without an isolated trading fort in the charge of a humorous Scottish factor, to which the French and half-breed trappers came with their furs. The romance of the great company's organisation gave material to Agnes Laut for her early novels, "Lords of the North", and "Heralds of Empire." The typical "dramatis personæ" of half-breeds, Indians, mounted policemen, and company employees appears also in the first fiction published by Sir Gilbert Parker—the stories of "Pretty Pierre" and his people. One of the

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most exciting institutions of the Hudson's Bay area, the annual Dog Derby at The Pas, is a feature of Douglas Durkin's novel "The Lobstick Trail."

However, the outstanding novels of the northern setting are in a minority when compared with the outstanding books of actual experience and exploration. It is one of the cases in which truth is, if not stranger than fiction, certainly quite as fascinating as fiction. The real life of the north needs no invented episodes to enhance its interest. Besides, any writer who has gone through the risk and hardship attendant upon the acquiring of first-hand information about the region has earned the right to be the central figure in his own narrative. So Agnes Laut's early novels are superseded by her books on "The Fur Trade of North America", "The Story of the Trapper", "The Hudson's Bay Company." Several records of exploration among the vast lakes and the rivers which drain them into the Arctic ocean are well written and full of interest. Among them are "The New North" by Agnes Deans Cameron, "Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada" by J. W. Tyrell, and "Through The Mackenzie Basin" by

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Charles Mair. More recently the scene has been shifted still farther north, and the exploration recorded has been more daring and unprecedented, the author-explorer being Vilhjalmur Stefansson. In "My Life Among the Esquimaux", "The Northward Course of Empire", and "The Friendly Arctic" he not only records his adventures and observations with charm and vividness but also proposes a clearly formulated economic theory of the North's potentialities.

Until the end of the nineteenth century the population of the North centred around the Hudson's Bay territory, their affairs being so largely bound up with those of the company. The literary centre of gravity was naturally situated there also. But a new economic impulse and a new region appeared with the Klondyke gold rush. The North suddenly ceased to be synonymous with Hudson's Bay and instead connoted the vicinity of the Yukon. And within a few years the new theme found its adequate literary exponent in Robert Service. Coming to White Horse as a bank-clerk while the stories of the gold rush were still in current circulation, Service grasped their salient values and something of the vast-

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ness and power of the natural surroundings. Devotion to Kipling had encouraged in him a vigorous descriptive method and a command of long swinging lines. The outcome was "Songs of a Sourdough" which won an enthusiastic audience throughout Canada and the United States and was not unknown in England. The prelude poem shows Service at his best as a painter of the North's landscape and prevailing atmosphere:

The lonely sunsets flare forlorn
Down valleys drearily desolate;
The lordly mountains soar in scorn,
As still as death, as stern as fate.

The lonely sunsets flame and die;
The giant valleys gulp the night;
The monster mountains scrape the sky,
Where eager stars are diamond-bright.

So gaunt against the gibbous moon,
Piercing the silence velvet-piled,
A lone wolf howls his ancient rune,
The fell arch-spirit of the Wild.

O outcast land! O leper land!
Let the lone wolf-cry all express—
The hate insensate of thy hand,
Thy heart's abysmal loneliness.

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Similarly in some unmistakable accord with the spirit of the "Great White Silence" are "The Call of the Wild", "The Spell of the Yukon", "The Law of the Yukon" and other virile descriptive pieces. The violence of the adjectives, the crude satire of the references to men of formal civilisation, give an almost visual picture of the country's "naked grandeur."

Even more popular, perhaps, were the narrative poems such as "The Shooting of Dan McGrew", "The Cremation of Sam McGee", "The Ballad of the Black Fox Skin", which were in special favor for their elocutionary value. The material might have been sufficiently striking in the form of short stories; but the condensation enforced by the versified method, and the potent emphasis of the rhyme, give the additional force that makes them genuinely pre-eminent. A touch of grim humour and a neat command of alliterative phrase are further aids to effectiveness. The phrase-making talent is to be seen even in the titles, "Songs of a Sourdough" being succeeded by "Ballads of a Cheechako" and "Rhymes of a Rolling Stone."

On the tide of his poetic popularity Service

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was persuaded to undertake a novel. "The Trail of '98" is faulty in technique and incredible in story, but it has episodes of authentic gold-rush history and descriptive passages with the emphatic pictorial power of those in the poems. More recently there have been efforts to present more plausible tales of the same region, such as the books of H. A. Cody and "A Sourdough Samaritan" by Charles Harrison Gibbons, but the vogue of Service has continued to dominate the reading public, whereas the more dignified and genuinely poetic narrative poems of Tom MacInnes, "Lonesome Bar" and "The Chilcoot Pass" go unrecognised.

The Canadian literature dealing with the North cannot be classified as representative of Canadian life. It depicts isolated conditions which prevailed at certain periods and which have a certain historic value; but the real secret of its success resides in the very fact that it depicts a setting which is associated in the popular mind with mystery and adventure, and a mode of life which appeals to the clandestine dare-devil nourished in the bosom of so many respectable members of society. The boys who devoured with avidity the ex-

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plots of Ballantyne's heroes are indeed fathers to the men who beat time with rapt expressions when someone recites "Dan McGrew." The North is so devotedly cherished by these incurable romanticists as the realm of elemental passions and superhuman endurance that only a disgruntled minority of the public is enthusiastic about the more temperate authors who record what they have personally observed and experienced on journeys of exploration. In modern folk-geography Canada means the North, and the North means a Hudson's Bay post with cunning vindictive trappers and godlike mounted policemen, or else it means a Dawson City whose flaring dance-halls exceed the aurora borealis. And if folk-geography keeps alive a spark of imaginative resilience in the Tired Business Man, the statistician who would disillusion him is as heartless as the negator of Santa Claus.

XVIII

Mountains and Ocean



THE Canadian province with the greatest and most varied endowment of natural magnificence, with an individuality altogether its own, is the one which has almost entirely failed as yet to find expression in literature. While there are many people in British Columbia who can write with undeniable ability in poetry and prose, the majority of them have not attempted to interpret the distinctive scenes and conditions which abound on every hand. A setting composed of two mighty natural phenomena, the Rockies and the Pacific; industries which combine adventure and big administrative problems; a history not long but redolent of romance; a population including picturesque emissaries of many races; all these things, and more, are capable of being used with immense literary effective-

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ness, and British Columbia might occupy an enviable place not only in Canadian literature but in that of the world. Yet the British Columbia poets give us lyrics that might emanate from any country in which modern civilisation thrives.

The province's two great boundaries, the mountains and the ocean, loom in the background of all the topics I have mentioned. The Rockies, cutting her off from the rest of Canada, have given British Columbia a history essentially different from that of Eastern provinces. All her early affairs depended on the Pacific: Vancouver's sailors replace Wolfe's soldiers, Spaniard and Russian replace Frenchman and Yankee. And her modern social and economic situation is controlled by the same factor: the Chinese and the Hindu form her chief immigration problem, her ocean traffic is extending into all the seven seas. In literature the historical theme is entirely untouched. What could be more fascinating than the little vessels venturing farther and farther into uncharted seas, sending reconnoitring parties into tortuous inlets, bursting upon virgin harbours, or the courtly interchange of challenges between British and

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Spanish commanders? Themes for poetry or romance crowd to the mind.

A later era in history brings grimmer scenes. The early settlers, after incredibly long and tedious sailing "around the Horn", had to seek home-sites in the impenetrable forest that came down the hillsides to the rocky coastline. Through the interior the Hudson's Bay Company traders, having explored the rivers and established the overland route, were planting their forts. Then came the gold rush, a season of vigorous exploits and unbridled passions. Successors to the miners in virility were the railway builders, and as well as the picturesque qualities in their life and work there is the larger drama in their achievement, which linked British Columbia to the East and consummated the Dominion. It is needless to dwell on the literary potentialities of every glimpse in the panorama. Yet the only books on the period are several almost forgotten novels of Sir Clive Phillips-Wolley, and a couple of volumes by D. W. Higgins in a transitional form between fiction and reminiscence which is not a great artistic success. As a curiosity may be included British Columbia's first poet, the famous Cap-

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tain Jack Crawford, some of whose verses are dated from Barkerville in the sixties.

Coming to the more complex life of the present day one finds that the material for literature is more plentiful than ever. The mode of living is different from that of Eastern Canada. Establishing homesteads has never been the primary object of the inhabitants. Ever since gold-rush days, British Columbia has been the rallying-ground of those who feel the irresistible westward impulse, those roving spirits to whom settled life is intolerable. Self-confident, insouciant, they have adventured in many strange corners of the world and are still insatiable. There is drama of another sort in the position of the new-comer. Countless families of the military and official classes have retired from lives of comparative luxury and come to the uncongenial toil of the ranch. Young Englishmen from an environment of tradition and culture arrive to seek a competency from the land, and succeed or fail according to their natures. Apart from a few poems, such as Lloyd Roberts' "Fruit Rancher" and Phillips-Wolley's "Songs of an English Esau", these pathetic or humorous struggles, with their

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dramatic elements of contrast and irony, remain unrecorded.

The Fruit Rancher.

He sees the rosy apples cling like flowers to
the bough:

He plucks the purple plums and spills the
cherries on the grass;

He wanted peace and silence,—God gives him
plenty now—

His feet upon the mountain and his shadow
on the pass.

He built himself a cabin from red cedars of
his own;

He blasted out the stumps and twitched the
boulders from the soil;

And with an axe and chisel he fashioned out
a throne

Where he might dine in grandeur off the
first fruits of his toil.

His orchard is a treasure-house alive with
song and sun,

Where currants ripe as rubies gleam and
golden pippins glow;

His servants are the wind and rain whose
work is never done,

Till winter rends the scarlet roof and banks
the halls with snow.

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He shouts across the valley, and the ranges
answer back;

His brushwood smoke at evening lifts a
column to the moon;

And dim beyond the distance where the
Kootenai snakes black,

He hears the silence shattered by the
laughter of the loon.

Typical of Phillips-Wolley's pictures of the
English settler's anomalous life in the un-
kempt clearings are "The Mortgaged Farm"
and "The Colonist's Cry". A few stanzas of
the latter may be quoted:

It's cruel of you, springtime, when folk are
growing old,

To set their hearts a-longing for banks of
primrose gold,

Green willows by the river, gold kingcups by
the Colne,

Where every breath is perfume, a jewel every
stone.

I see Mount Baker's summit, a cone of rosy
snow—

Where waves broke, bloom the lilies; the
fields of ocean glow

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As God's sign gleams in heaven! the rocks
are pink with foam
Of ribes and of stone-crop—our hearts cry
out for home!

O England, Songland, Springland! we wander
whilst we live:
To broaden Britain's empire, the best we have
we give;
Surely they sleep the soundest in Mother's
lap who lie.
We have worked, our strength is ended: ah!
call us home to die.

British Columbians in some districts still regard themselves as in a colony rather than a dominion, and of this point of view, which is undeniably a definite factor in Canadian life, Phillips-Wolley is the laureate.

Ranch life in various parts of the province has formed the background for a number of novels, such as Robert Allison Hood's "The Chivalry of Keith Leicester" and "The Quest of Alistair", Robert Watson's "The Girl of O. K. Valley" and "The Spoilers of the Valley", Evah McKowan's "Janet of Kootenay" and "Graydon of the Windermere", and Frederick Niven's "The Lady of the Cross-

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ing"; but somehow the spirit of the province is not fully captured by any of the writers.

The great industries—mining, forestry and fisheries— suggest a magnificent drama of conflict. Singly or in little bands, men match themselves against the elements or assail the vastest fortresses of nature. The primitive terms of the contest and the primitive nomadic life entailed reveal men's characters in the most vivid light, against a background with endless possibilities for irony or grandeur. And literature has scarcely invaded it: the mines appear in Ralph Connor's "Black Rock" and "The Prospector", and in several thrilling yarns by Frederick Niven; the fishing and timber industries in Bertrand Sinclair's novels. The roster extends no further.

The alert Japanese and dignified Sikh, penetrating the industrial life of the province and adapting to it their oriental habits—always mysterious to the European—are an element in the population without a parallel elsewhere. The only book which has been devoted to them, H. Glynn-Ward's "The Writing on the Wall", being frankly antagonistic

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in spirit, does not fully reveal the literary values of their anomalous presence.

The waterfront of the ports is another place of atmosphere which should provoke the imagination. The romance of trade and the far-flung contacts of the shabbiest "tramp" are in the very spirit of modern poetry. Cicely Fox-Smith recognised it during her sojourn, and Ronald Kenvyn has treated it humorously, but the true magician has not yet touched it with the wand which transmutes the neglected episodes of our daily life into the compelling glory of art. Both the waterfront theme and the oriental theme previously mentioned find their most adequate representations in the vivid sketches of Pollough Pogue, which merit more permanent form than the daily newspaper column.

Like everything else in the province, the Indians of British Columbia differ from those of the rest of the country. The forests and rivers, mountains and ocean, produced an entirely different mode of life from that of the plains, and as a consequence, their legends and customs are peculiar to themselves. Pauline Johnson has proved the charm of these legends, and Lionel Haweis their poetic

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power in his poem "Tsoqalem." The inaccessible northern wilds of the province, where even yet the Indian names and primitive conditions survive, have been the subject of picturesque verses by H. Glynn-Ward; and the same writer has vividly and wittily presented enough romance and courage to be the raw material of a dozen novels, in "The Glamour of British Columbia."

On the scenery of British Columbia as literary material I have not expatiated. Nature poetry flourishes in the province, but few poets have yet given us genuine pictures of Mount Robson or the Fraser canyon or the great Pacific breakers at Barkley Sound. In two or three poems Wilson MacDonald has caught something of it, and Bliss Carman's recent visits produced a series of snap-shot views. Otherwise the celebration of British Columbia's natural majesty has been relegated to the railway publicity departments.

Apart from definite beauty spots, however, the immanent spirit of the British Columbia scene has been felt by two or three poets. Perhaps the best expressions of it are by Phillips-Wolley and Carroll Aikins. Here is

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part of the former's pompous but impressive
"Night on the Frontier":

The pines that were sun-filled, and tuneful
 swayed
 To the dance music of the merry morn,
Stand stark as men beside a grave new-made
 Pointing lean fingers from a world forlorn,
 Bidding man be afraid.

. . . And now! my lonely littleness! That cry,
 Some homing seabird's, on wan waves
 delayed
Just at the shadow's edge, is a reply
 To my heart's terror. Wherefore have I
 strayed
 Who am so sore afraid?

I dare not think. The darkness hems me
 round;
 The things I dreamed were lifeless leave
 their place,
Speak without voices, move without a sound,
 Crowds that I know not fill all-circling space,
 I almost see Thy Face. . .

Equally impressive and less tradition-bound
is Carroll Aikins' sonnet "In the Orchard":

I see God in my orchard every hour,
And in the downward pulses of the sun
I feel His heart beat, and I feel the power

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Of pregnancy in every passing shower;
And still I feel His infinite spirit spun
In bud and blossom, and His bidding done
By amber bees, and many a pollened flower
With mating song and silent orison.

And when night hovers over field and grove
With shadowy plumage, and all creatures
 sleep,
Still on the lake the guardian waters keep
A lamping vigil with His stars above,
And in the vast unventured hills I see
The awful measure of His mastery.

The sense of awe and reverence which pervades both the poems quoted is almost inevitable in anyone who contemplates in poetic mood the usual British Columbia landscape. And such a sense is one of the requisites for poetry with the supreme quality of "high seriousness." So one is justified in awaiting with keen interest the future literary output of the westernmost province.

I have tried to suggest briefly some of the splendid literary material which can be had for the asking, admirably fitted for the purposes of story, poem or play. I can think of no other place where there is such a variety of pictur-

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esque and dramatic situations and settings, and so few literary representations of them.

So the Pacific province forms an appropriate conclusion to this whole study of the achievements and possibilities of Canadian literature. In the Last West, as throughout Canada, the few productions of distinctive merit form merely a hint of what may eventually be accomplished if the country finds adequate interpreters. Both the natural setting and the conditions of human existence being unique and fascinating, the literature which truly mirrors them will necessarily have qualities all its own. And even if the work of most of the present Canadian writers cannot claim to have reached that final consummation, they are at least to be credited with doing sturdy pioneer work by which their successors will benefit. And I hope to have shown that their best work has qualities which being held in common by the outstanding Canadians and being definably different from the literature of other countries, presumably foreshadow the characteristics of the future national literature of Canada. Considering the social and economic history of the country, we have no reason to be ashamed of the

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bulk and quality of its literature heretofore, and on the basis of what is already achieved, we are justified in hoping that Canada will be recognised as a genuine contributor to the literature of the world.

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